

NEW

Running for Beginners

Everything you need to know
to get started with running

Over
200 tips
inside



- ✔ Nutritional advice
- ✔ The latest kit and gadgets
- ✔ Tips on health, safe running and avoiding injury

Welcome to **Running** for **Beginners**

Running is an obvious choice when looking for ways to get fit and lose weight, or you just want a new hobby. After all, it's cheap to take up, requires minimal kit and burns calories fast. However, it can be daunting when you are first starting out, which is where this book comes in. Here, we have compiled all of the essential advice that you need to know to start running today. We look at everything from nutrition and hydration to what to wear, as well as how to train properly, the best ways to prevent injury, why you should enter a race and losing weight safely. The book is divided into specific sections, so that you can find exactly what you need to know at a glance. This Fifth Revised Edition brings with it an updated kit section, advice based on the latest nutritional research, and closer look into hyped territories such as sports nutrition, smartwatches and fitness bands.

We've also included a collation of the perfect complementary classes for runners, and discover what it takes to partake in the increasingly popular obstacle runs and so-called 'mud runs'. We hope that this book not only encourages you to start running, but also to keep it up and strive to achieve new goals. Once you get the running bug, there is no going back.



Running for Beginners

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Contents



10

*All you need
to get started*

Getting started

- 10** **Top 20 tips for new runners**
Everything you need to know
- 16** **Essential kit**
The basic gear you need
- 18** **Walk/run technique**
Start slow for the best results
- 20** **Warming up and cooling down**
Why these are so important
- 22** **Stay safe on the road**
Make sure you dress to be seen
- 24** **Beginner's advice for nutrition and hydration**
Eat right for running results
- 26** **Fit running into your life**
Even with the busiest of schedules
- 28** **Common running injuries**
What to watch out for
- 30** **Running communities**
Make new friends and share stories

Health & fitness

- 34** **The benefits of running**
How running helps your health
- 40** **Are you fit to run?**
Make sure you are ready to run
- 44** **Prevent injuries**
Advice for staying healthy
- 46** **Nutrition for runners**
How to eat the best foods
- 48** **Importance of carbs**
A runner's best friend
- 50** **Sports nutrition**
What's the benefit of sports products aimed at athletes and runners?
- 52** **Beat the bulge**
Top advice for weight loss results
- 56** **Surfaces**
Where you run can make a big impact
- 58** **Running for women**
Tailored tips for female eyes only
- 60** **Running for men**
Tailored tips for male eyes only



44

Learn to avoid injuries

Training

- 64** **Types of training**
Add variety into your running
- 70** **Perfect running form**
Make sure you are running right
- 72** **Indoors vs outdoors: which is best?**
The treadmill or the road?
- 74** **Other exercises to complement running**
The best cross-training for runners
- 78** **Interval training**
Add in different-paced running
- 80** **Post-injury running**
Getting back to health
- 82** **Overtraining and the risks**
Don't fall foul of this common issue
- 84** **How to properly recover after a run**
The right way to rest



88 *Get ready for your first race*



118

Essential running gadgets

Racing

- 88** **Racing for beginners**
Enter your first race today
- 94** **Follow a training plan**
Meet your target race goal
- 96** **The next phase of racing**
Progress from 5K to 10K
- 98** **Going the distance**
Prepare for a half marathon
- 100** **Can I run a marathon?**
Marathon training for beginners
- 102** **Preparing for OCR**
Are you ready to get muddy?
- 104** **Staying motivated**
The best tips to keep it up
- 106** **First race tips**
Get ready for the finish line
- 108** **Being prepared**
Be safe and ready for your race
- 110** **Pace your race**
How to make sure you finish
- 112** **Running for charity**
Combine running with a cause
- 114** **Different race types**
Try something a bit different

Essential gear

- 118** **Running gadgets**
Which ones do you need?
- 122** **Smart watches**
Is this new trend for you?
- 124** **Running apps**
The best ways to track your runs
- 126** **Trainers**
A good trainer is a runner's saviour
- 128** **Men's trainers**
The best shoes for your feet
- 130** **Women's trainers**
Options whatever your budget
- 132** **Tops**
Tees, tanks and long sleeves
- 134** **Bottoms**
Running tights and shorts
- 136** **Jackets**
Keep warm in winter
- 138** **Accessories**
Essential extras for your run
- 140** **GPS watches**
Monitor your pace and distance
- 142** **Where to buy**
Monitor your pace and distance

Inspiration

- 146** **Coastal paths**
Marvel at coastal paths on a run
- 148** **Off-road trails**
Abandon the tarmac for a great run
- 150** **Muddy forests**
Get ready for your first OCR!
- 152** **Steep inclines**
A perfect stamina exercise
- 154** **On the beach**
Challenge the calves with soft sand
- 156** **Country scenes**
Enjoy rural England on a run
- 158** **Setting a challenge**
Find a location that pushes you
- 160** **Early risers**
Get your miles at the crack of dawn

Getting started

26

*Discover how to
fit running into
your life*



Getting started

All you need to know to get out running today, with advice on kit, nutrition, stretching and preventing injury from the outset

10

Top 20 tips

Everything you need to know

16

Essential kit

The basic gear you need

18

Walk/run technique

Start slow for the best results

20

**Warming up and
cooling down**

Why these are so important

22

Stay safe on the road

Make sure you dress to be seen

24

**Beginner's advice for
nutrition and hydration**

Eat right for running results

26

Fit running into your life

Work around the busiest of schedules

28

Common injuries

What to watch out for

30

Running communities

Make new friends and share stories

20

*Learn how to
warm up and
cool down*

28

*Understanding
common injuries*





22 *Stay safe
when running*



10 *Essential tips to help
you get started*



24 *Find the best foods
to give you energy*



18

*Use the walk/
run technique to
build up slowly*

Top 20 tips for new runners

Ready to give running a try? Here are our top tips for beginners

Congratulations, you have made the decision to start running! That's the hard part over and done with. It's tempting to get straight out and start running today, but there are a few things that you need to bear in mind first, as we will show you here.

01 Start slowly

It can be hard to rein in your enthusiasm when you first start running, but it pays to start out slowly, whatever your current level of fitness. Running exerts a lot of impact and stress on your body, and if it is not prepared for it, you may suffer from injury and/or a lack of motivation. Don't feel that you have to give all or nothing; just imagine yourself three months down the line, fitter, healthier and happier. Take the time to get prepared, sort out your kit and training plan, and then you will be ready to get running.

02 Time not distance

Races are measured by distance, so it's common to go out and start running in miles or kilometres. However, new runners might find that time is a more motivational gauge. When you start out, try running for ten minutes, and then build up by five minutes every week, or you can work in intervals of running and walking. See how far you can run in a set time one week, and then try to beat the distance the next. When you can run for 30 minutes non-stop, then you can start worrying about distances instead and think about preparing for a race.

03 Listen to your body

Your body knows best when it comes to running. If something hurts, then that is a sign that you are overworking your body and need a rest. Not every ache and

pain means that you need to stop running, but only you know how much pain you are in, and whether you can keep running through it. Also, look out for the signs of overtraining (see page 44 for more), such as tiredness, lack of motivation, lack of sleep, loss of appetite, etc. These are all messages from your body to take a break. When you are ready to run again, your body will let you know that too.

04 Have a plan

Running, like any other hobby, takes planning to fit it in. Life is so busy that it is easy for exercise to fall by the wayside and yet it is so important. Decide how often you can realistically fit in running and when you are going to do it. Add this into your phone's calendar or your diary as an appointment that you are not going to miss. Make sure your friends and family know how important it is to you so that they respect that your running time is non-negotiable, and that they need to support you to help you meet your goals.

05 Use your commute

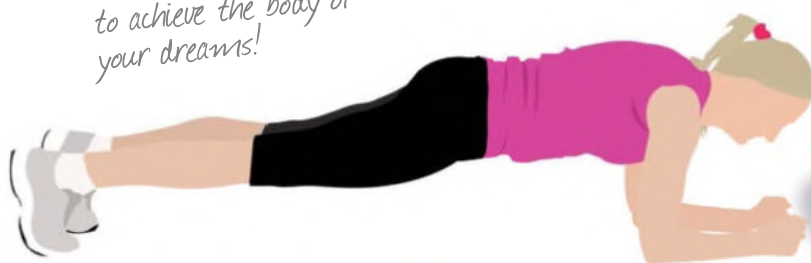
One of the hardest things about running is actually having the time to do it. We suggest looking at how you can use your daily commute to fit in a run without taking too much time out of your day. Can you run home from work with a small running bag for you to keep your things in? Or could you run home from the school run, or invest in a running buggy and have a morning jog instead? Need to walk the dog? Turn it into a run. By making the most of journeys that you have to make, you will be able to become a regular runner.



06 Set a goal

Working towards a goal, no matter how small, will motivate you to keep running. Pick a large goal, such as losing a stone, running six miles or anything else that you want to achieve. Now, break that goal down into lots of small steps so that you have achievable markers to aim for. For example, if you want to lose weight, you can start smaller by saying, 'I am going to eat well and run around the block twice this week', and then 'I will run for 20 minutes non-stop by the end of this month and get into my favourite jeans again'.

Use additional training to achieve the body of your dreams!



Finishing a race is a great motivation



Aim to lose weight through running



07 Walk/run

If you are completely new to running, or exercise in general, then start off with a walk/run program. This involves periods of running and walking to complete a set distance or time. If you're already reasonably fit, then you might only need to walk for a short interval in the middle of your workout, but otherwise consider starting out with a two-minute walk, one-minute run program or similar and increase the running intervals over time. This will start to build your fitness, ease your body into running and prevent you from getting common injuries.

Getting started



Don't forget to stretch,
or you may get injured

08 Keep a log

One of the best ways to ensure that you stay motivated when running is to keep a log of your progress. On Day 1, you may only be able to run for five minutes until you are out of breath, but by Day 10 you might be able to run for ten minutes with no pain. If the going gets tough, you can look back at those early running logs and remind yourself just how far you have come since you started running. It really won't take long to build up, and you will soon be running for 30 minutes in one go and wondering what you found so hard to begin with!

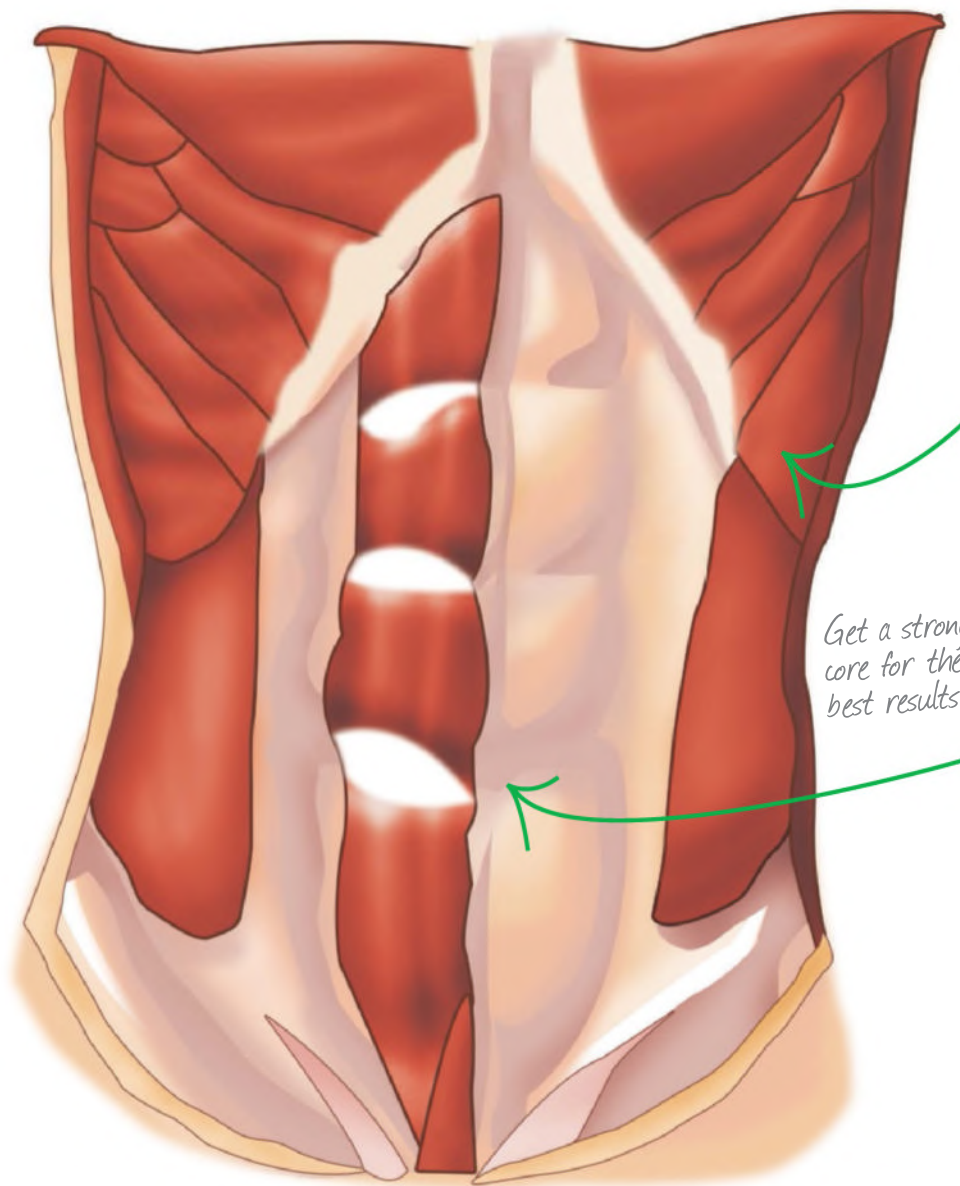
09 Warm up and cool down

Whether you are running for 26 minutes or 26 miles, you need to put time aside for warming up and cooling down, or you will suffer the consequences! We are not just being melodramatic – a lack of warming up can cause pulled muscles, and not cooling down will leave

its mark via achy legs the next day. To warm up properly, start with a fast walk or slow jog before going into your run; always cool down with a range of stretches. Turn to page 20 for more on warming up and cooling down.

10 Get the right trainers

You don't need a lot to start running. But the one thing that you definitely shouldn't scrimp on is your trainers. We've seen far too many people running in unsupportive fashion trainers, which is begging for an injury. Running trainers are designed to support your foot, absorb impact and reduce the chance of injury. Every person's feet are different, too, so what works for one runner won't necessarily work for another. Before you start running, get into a dedicated running or sports shop and ask them to analyse your running so that they can deduce how much cushioning and support you need. Turn to page 126 in this book for a guide to the best trainers around to suit every budget.



Get a strong core for the best results

11 Don't neglect your core

A strong core makes a strong runner. It's not just about getting that six-pack; the core is your powerhouse and determines how good your running form is. Good running form means less chance of injury. Things like sit-ups are traditional core builders, but consider yoga or Pilates as a gentle way of getting a strong core, while also helping to stretch out your muscles.

12 Strength training

Hit the gym as part of your running routine to build up strength. Your legs take a lot of pressure and stress when you're hitting the tarmac, so the stronger they are the better. Exercises like lunges and squats are perfect, adding in hand weights as you progress, as are the leg standing poses in yoga. Classes like circuits are good for strength training, as well as adding extra cardio. See pages 74-77 for inspiring exercises and classes.

13 The right kit

You don't need the latest technical gear to start running, but there are definitely a few pieces of kit that you should think about. Women should start with a good sports bra if you don't want everything bouncing around, causing pain and future sagging. Make sure that you get one for maximum support, as your breasts will move a great deal during a running session. Next, when it comes to tops, avoid cotton. Cotton will absorb your sweat, which will make you feel cold and the material will become heavy. Even a budget technical t-shirt will offer wicking properties to keep you warm on a cold day and cool on a hot one, as well as staying dry.

Get the right trainers to suit your needs for a comfortable run



The right kit can make a difference, but it doesn't have to cost the earth!

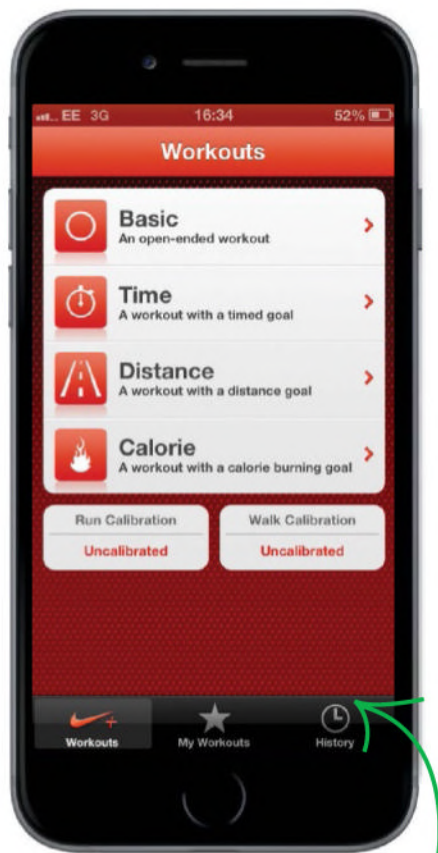
Getting started

14 Allow for recovery

We will bang on about recovery throughout this book! It really is important, especially for a new runner. Even marathon runners and elite athletes know the value of rest days – by which we mean complete rest! Your muscles need time and energy to recover and repair. Not doing so leaves them weak, increasing the chance of injury every time you go out for a run. Run one day, rest the next – that's the simplest way to ensure that you will have a problem-free start to your running hobby.

15 Use apps

Running technology is pretty advanced and your smartphone can really help you out as a beginner. Have a look at the various apps available, which include ones that give you a training program, or map your distance, time and calorie burn. These save you the trouble of logging your runs by hand, but they are also easy to share so that you can show friends and family how well you are getting on.



Use your phone to log your progress

16 Kick the habit

Smoking and drinking will really hinder your running performance. Smoking makes exercise more difficult, as you will suffer problems with your breathing, and thus find it harder to progress. You won't recover as well after exercising, either. We're not saying you should give up drinking completely (though we do recommend giving up smoking), but limit yourself to no more than a glass a night, with a couple of alcohol-free days every week. Drinking dehydrates your body, which will in turn adversely affect your ability to run effectively.

17 Keep hydrated

Water is the most essential thing that you need to be taking on board when you exercise. Don't flood your system by gulping water down in large quantities in one go; sip water throughout the day so that you are always well hydrated. When you know you are going for a run, ensure that in the couple of hours before you head out, you take on a decent amount of water. For shorter runs, you probably won't need to take water out with you, but if you do then sip it slowly during your run. Always rehydrate when you get back from running.



18 Don't run alone

Running is a solitary sport by nature, but it can be hard to motivate yourself to get out when you are on your own. Recruit a friend or family member to go running with you, and the time will go much faster. You could get your children to cycle alongside you, or take the dog out for a run. Consider joining a club for new runners if you need company, as they will help you to get the most out of yourself, as well as meet like-minded runners. There are also online forums that are designed to help you find local runners of a similar ability, so it is worth checking these out too.

19 Stay safe

If you go out running alone, then you need to be aware of your safety. When listening to music, make sure that you keep the volume down to the point where you are aware of your surroundings, and take extra care when crossing a road. We suggest that you don't use headphones at all when running at night, as you need to keep your wits about you. Make sure that you can be seen too, by wearing high-

vis kit when it's dark and always run towards oncoming traffic if there is no pavement. Finally, make sure that someone knows where you are running and avoid isolated areas at night, and plan a familiar route with shops or houses where you could ask for help in emergencies. If you can, take your phone with you in a pocket or in your hand.

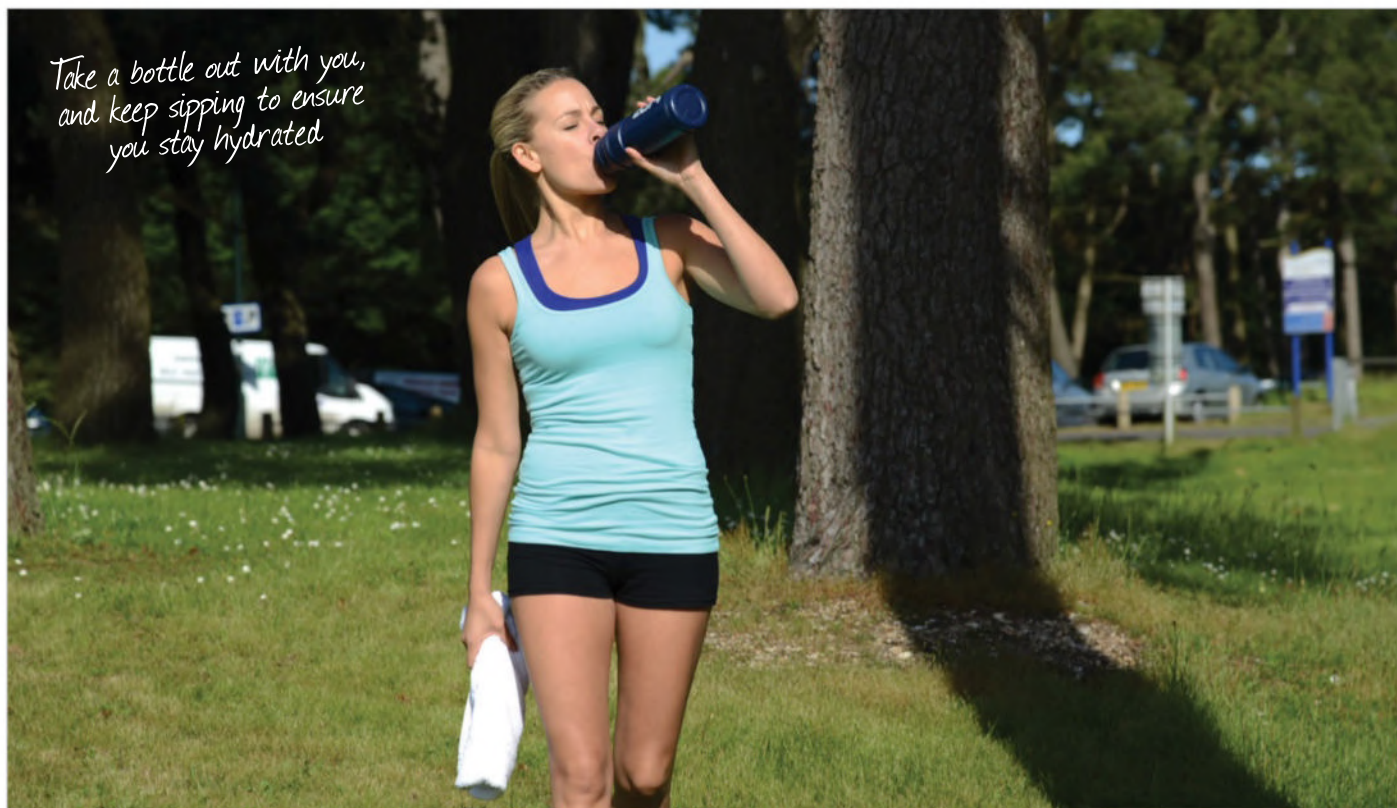
20 Eat right

Good nutrition is essential to all of us, but as a runner it is even more key. You need to be eating a healthy diet to fuel your sport, which includes a balance of proteins, carbs and fruit and veg. Limit your intake of sugar and high-fat foods, and make sure that you eat three times a day – with two snacks – to keep your metabolism ticking over. Don't try and go on to a strict diet when running, as you need to ensure that you are getting all the vitamins and minerals you need. A healthy, balanced diet will have good results, and help you to keep on running.

The right food will fuel you to keep running



Take a bottle out with you, and keep sipping to ensure you stay hydrated



Essential kit

You don't need a lot to get started with running. Here are the key pieces of kit you need

As a new runner, it can be overwhelming to see the sheer number of clothing, trainers, and gadgets being pushed at runners. However, one of the joys of running, is that you can get started with just a few essentials, making it a cheap and accessible sport.

The most important item you will need, and should justify spending a bit of money on, is trainers. A decent high-quality pair of specially designed running shoes will last you a few hundred miles and make sure you are running safely without the risk of injury. Check out our guide to the best trainers around on page 126 in this book.

When embarking on a new hobby, don't rush out and waste money on high-end articles that you just won't need. Buying a few essential pieces will encourage you to go out running in your new togs, but without the shopping-related guilt involved with some of the very costly pieces available.

Here we show you what key items should be featuring in your summer and winter wardrobes, but as your skills develop so will your tastes, so keep your eyes out for new and improved items available on the market.

Once you have the essentials, you will look the part and that will ultimately make you feel like a runner. Achieving this feeling will then motivate you to keep up your newly found passion and discipline.

Shop around

Research the kit you are after and try items on if possible, as some running brands come up a bit snug. When you have settled on what you'd like to buy, shop around on the high street, but also online where there are always bargains to be found. On many online stores you will find sizable discounts and receive a free pair of running socks if you spend over a certain amount.

Sports bra
Investing in a running specific bra is a very important purchase to make. It won't just allow you to run in comfort but it is also medically advised. Female breasts contain no muscle, only tissue and fat, so they need to be held in place firmly or irreparable stretching and damage can occur.

Hat
We lose a lot of body heat through our heads, so trap it in during the winter months with a thin hat. If a hat isn't your thing, try a headband wide enough to cover your ears.



What's that? Wicking: Good sports gear will 'wick' sweat away from your body, which

Top tip Trainers

For your first pair of running shoes, go to a specific store where you will receive expert help. They will assess your feet and running style, then match you up with the perfect pair. If you don't get your feet looked at early on and wear incorrect trainers, it may lead to injury and bad posture and running form.

High-visibility clothing

Make sure you are clearly visible in the evenings or winter months by choosing items of clothing with reflective strips on them or invest in a cheap high-visibility vest.

Breathable material

Pick running t-shirts that are made from breathable fabrics. Wearing better-quality t-shirts may cost a bit more because of the 'wicking' material, but they will be more enjoyable to wear, plus they wash well with no shrinking and dry in hours.

Lightweight jacket or top

A wind and weatherproof jacket or top is essential. It can transform a cold, wet, wind-beaten run into an enjoyable spell in the elements.

Gloves

A necessity when the weather turns, they protect from all of the winter elements making your run more bearable. They are easily rolled up and placed in a pocket too so always carry them in colder months.

Socks

Invest in a comfortable pair to ward off blisters and chaffing. Most running socks are specially designed to fit to the contours of your feet and usually come fitted with extra cushioning and are made from moisture absorbing fabric.

Running tights

Short, knee-length, three-quarter-length or ankle-length, making sure that you have a suitable variety for the seasons will keep your legs happy and wearing tighter trousers will hold muscles in place better resulting in less achy legs.

means that it will stop sweat from staying on your skin and making you feel cold, as well as helping out your skin's own cooling system.

The walk/run technique

Build up your running slowly and steadily to stay motivated and enthused

When you start running for the first time, you are not expected to suddenly run full-pelt for three miles non-stop. In fact, it is much better to master what is called the 'walk/run'.

Walking during a run is not showing weakness or a poor level of fitness. It is, in fact, the most sensible way to begin your running training. People assume that running is easy, and that all you do is start to run and continue for however long you want. How wrong they are, as there is much more to it!

Running puts an enormous amount of pressure on your body, so when first starting out, you must be careful not to do any permanent damage by overworking your joints, bones and muscles.

Adding walking to your running workout ensures that you increase the amount of time you spend running in one go gradually. It is a simple process, and a personal way to organise your workouts and achieve the goals you have

set yourself. Only you will know how good you are feeling, so listen to your body.

After a light warm-up session, start out with small stints of jogging followed by light relaxed walking, for example, one minute running with five minutes walking. Repeat this cycle until you have completed your allotted workout time (no more than 30 minutes for someone new to exercise, and running in particular).

If you are struggling with the running part, then just decrease the time. Walking is a vital part of any training plan, and is necessary to repair your muscles that will allow you to keep stopping and starting. Make sure you don't tire yourself out too quickly, or you will really struggle to start running again.

If timing your run/walks seems too regimented, then use a simplified training method of running to self-set goal posts. For example, run to the next lamp post, then walk to the end of the road and repeat. Setting yourself markers like this will show you how quickly you are progressing, and that a goal

that once seemed unachievable will be a piece of cake within a few weeks.

Build up the ratios gradually each week. To allow your body to get used to the motions, make sure you only gradually increase the time. If you up your running in the second week to two minutes, keep the walking break at five minutes, but drop it down to four minutes the week after.

You'll be surprised at how quickly you will be able to up the time and distance of your runs using this method. Never be ashamed to walk, as runners of all levels use this technique, even marathon runners, and it is the safest way to ensure your continued improvement without risking injury.



One-month walk/run training plan

Here is a simple guide for you to follow, but remember to increase or decrease time scales to suit how you feel. Only you will know how much you can handle. Don't run until you're

exhausted or feel ill, and maintain the gradual incline in running. Always begin workouts with at least five minutes of gentle warming up, such as a light walking and stretching.

Begin to build up the time you are on your feet week on week to improve stamina

Week 1	Activity	Duration
Monday	1-min run/7-min walk	Repeat for 20 minutes
Tuesday	Rest day	Some light walking can be done
Wednesday	1-min run/7-min walk	Repeat for 20 minutes
Thursday	Rest day	Some light walking can be done
Friday	1-min run/6-min walk	Repeat for 20 minutes
Saturday	Rest day	Rest day
Sunday	Rest day	Rest day

Week 2	Activity	Duration
Monday	1-min run/6-min walk	Repeat for 30 minutes
Tuesday	Rest day	Some light walking can be done
Wednesday	1-min 30-sec run/5-min walk	Repeat for 20 minutes
Thursday	Rest day	Some light walking can be done
Friday	2-min run/7-min walk	Repeat for 30 minutes
Saturday	Rest day	Rest day
Sunday	Rest day	Rest day



Stick with it and you will soon be able to run for longer than you thought possible

You will start noticing how much you have improved. Stay motivated and keep training

Week 3	Activity	Duration
Monday	2-min run/7-min walk	Repeat for 30-40 minutes
Tuesday	Rest day	Some light walking can be done
Wednesday	2-min run/6-min walk	Repeat for 30 minutes
Thursday	Rest day	Some light walking can be done
Friday	2-min 30-sec run/6-min walk	Repeat for 30 minutes
Saturday	Rest day	Rest day
Sunday	Rest day	Rest day

Week 4	Activity	Duration
Monday	3-min run/7-min walk	Repeat for 30-40 minutes
Tuesday	Rest day	Some light walking can be done
Wednesday	3-min run/6-min walk	Repeat for 30 minutes
Thursday	Rest day	Some light walking can be done
Friday	3-min 30-sec run/6-min walk	Repeat for 30-40 minutes
Saturday	Rest day	Rest day
Sunday	Rest day	Rest day

Warming up and cooling down

An essential guide to why warming up and cooling down are vital elements in your workouts

Warming up your muscles before a workout is essential to staying a happy, healthy runner. Before partaking in any form of physical activity, you should always remember to limber up. If you rush into a workout, it's likely that you will pull a muscle, and without an adequate cooling-off time it will take longer to repair itself.

No more than ten minutes is required for a beginner to stretch all of the appropriate areas, but when planning your weekly workouts, always factor this time in, both for warming up and cooling down. If you forget, you'll soon notice when you wake up the next day with sore, aching muscles.

Dynamic stretches are considered to be more effective than static ones, as they loosen everything up, removing stiffness quicker. Even after warming up, though, take the first five

minutes of your workout at a more leisurely pace to ensure everything is moving and working efficiently.

The purpose of warming up is not just to relieve stiff muscles, but to raise your heart level, get your blood pumping and get you motivated for a training session. A typical warm-up for a novice runner should begin slowly with a light walk, gradually building up to a faster-paced walk or light jog over the course of five minutes. With your muscles warmed up nicely, move onto some dynamic stretches composing of knee lifts, lunge walking, squats and some side-stretching. Once you have done these aerobic warm-ups, you can stretch out any other areas you feel need extra loosening. Never go straight into stretching cold muscles, as you will run the risk of pulling something.

Cooling down doesn't take as long as warming up, but it's just as important. Finish

off your workout with a light jog or fast-paced walk for five minutes, decreasing in momentum as your breath returns to a more normal level.

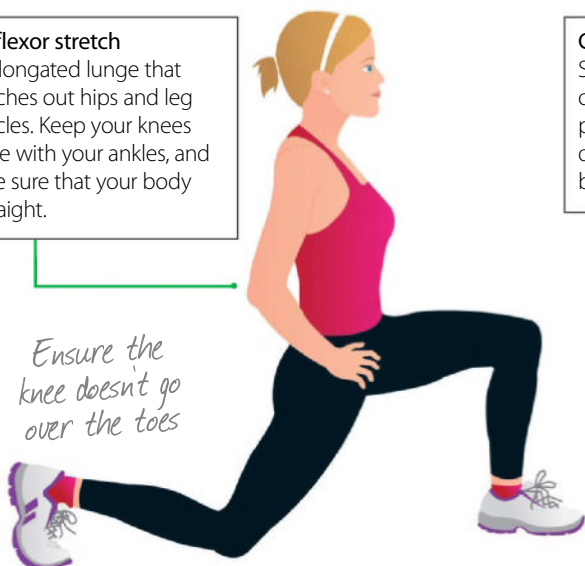
Once you have caught your breath, stretch out your muscles. Ensure your calves (lower legs), hamstrings (upper back of leg), quads (upper front of leg) and glutes (bottom muscles) are stretched out to ensure there's no onset muscle soreness in days to come. Also, spend a few minutes focusing on sidestep stretches and hip flexes to avoid cramp and groin strain.

When stretching, hold each pose for 15-30 seconds for the best results and don't rush them, repeating each stretch several times. Featured here are some of the most basic but fundamental stretches you need to incorporate into each warm-up/cool-down session. More flexibility will come with time, but for now take it easy; don't force muscles to stretch further than they can comfortably.

Hip flexor stretch

An elongated lunge that stretches out hips and leg muscles. Keep your knees in line with your ankles, and make sure that your body is straight.

Ensure the knee doesn't go over the toes

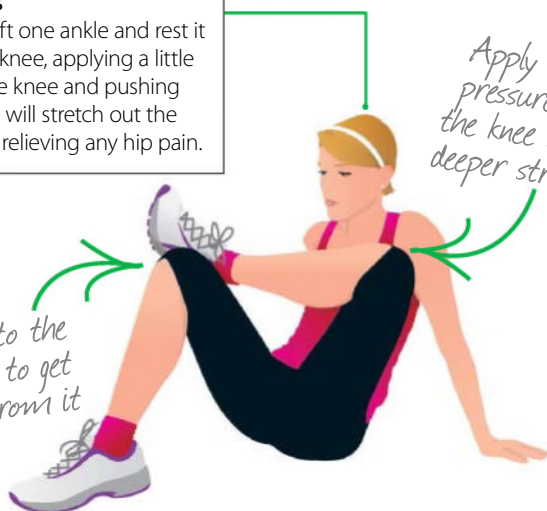


Gluteus muscles

Sit on the floor, lift one ankle and rest it on the opposite knee, applying a little pressure onto the knee and pushing downwards. This will stretch out the bottom muscles relieving any hip pain.

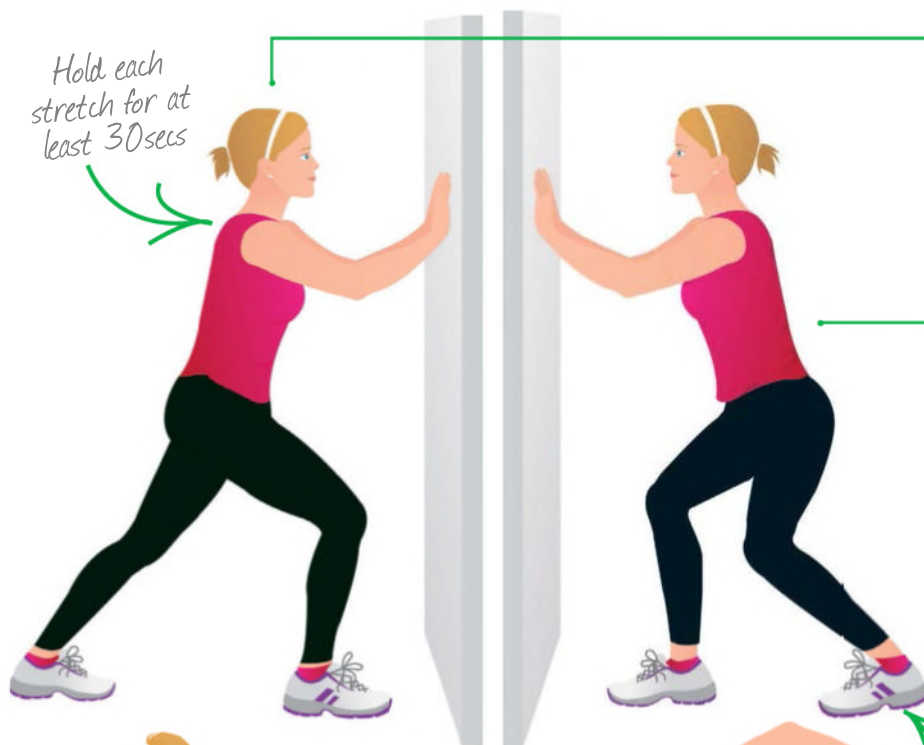
Lean into the stretch to get more from it

Apply light pressure to the knee for a deeper stretch



What's that? Dynamic stretch: This is a stretching exercise where you're moving into a pose at a quicker pace, such as a lunge. Repeating the faster lunge transforms

Hold each stretch for at least 30 secs



Upper calf

Push against a surface, ensuring your back heel is firmly on the floor and back leg is straight. Hold for 15-30 seconds, leaning further into the stretch as it becomes more comfortable; there shouldn't be a lot of pressure on the front leg. Repeat for both legs several times.

Lower calf

Remember to stretch out the lower part of the calf. To do this, take the usual calf stretch pose (above) then bend the back knee. Lean further into the stretch for more resistance. There should be little to no pressure exerted on the front leg.

Repeat the stretches over several times, holding well each time

Squat low into the stretch to add a little extra resistance to the legs

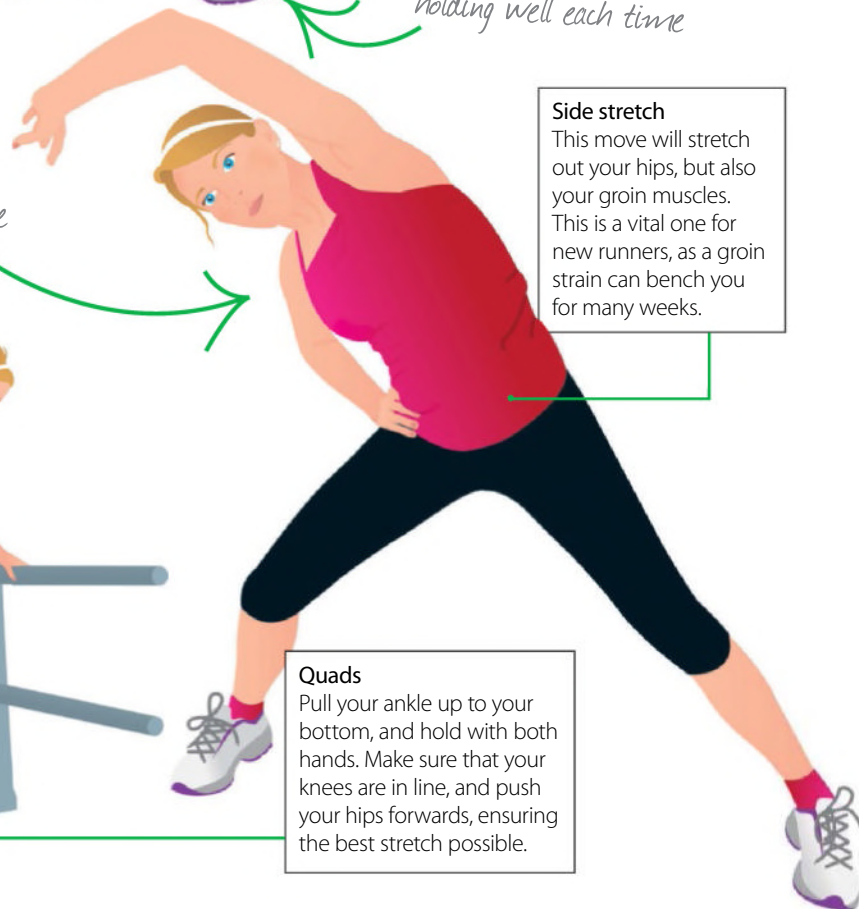


Hamstring

There are several ways to stretch this muscle out; simply touching your toes is effective, but also try lifting your leg onto a high surface and leaning into the stretch. You can increase this with a resistance band. Repeat several times over, and each time you breathe out, lean into the stretch a little bit more.

Side stretch

This move will stretch out your hips, but also your groin muscles. This is a vital one for new runners, as a groin strain can bench you for many weeks.



Quads

Pull your ankle up to your bottom, and hold with both hands. Make sure that your knees are in line, and push your hips forwards, ensuring the best stretch possible.

it into a lunge walk. Dynamic poses can be more beneficial than stationary stretches.

Stay safe on the road

Be aware of your surroundings at all times and never put yourself in unnecessary danger

Running safely seems like an obvious thing for us to tell you, but you would be surprised by how many runners don't take their personal safety seriously enough.

When trying to fit running into your hectic schedules, filled with work, school runs, family and social commitments, you may find yourself having to get up at the crack of dawn or venturing out late in the evening. When these instances crop up, always be aware of what route you will be taking and let someone know where you are going.

Many of our favourite running routes are either not well lit or have intermittent street lights, so make sure you are dressed to be seen. This involves picking running gear in bright colours where possible and with reflective strips on them. Invest in a reflective vest if your jacket is dark, and if you really favour remote spots, go as far as wearing small bike lights or a head torch. You can never be too bright.

Women especially need to be aware that unless in a well-lit, populated area, you should never run alone. If you do want to run in a set place, then get a group together or perhaps even consider joining a running club. A great social perk to the running bug is meeting other like-minded people and it eliminates possible dangers.

In case of emergencies, always carry a mobile phone with you or some change for a phone box if you know one is on your route, plus some ID. You don't ever want to run the risk of injuring yourself and getting stranded. Make sure you tell someone where you are planning to go; that way you know someone will be expecting you back at a set time. This also commits you into running the distance, helping you with any motivational issues.

Running with music is a preferred motivational technique for many runners, but

be cautious. Never have your music blaring so loud that you are no longer aware of your surroundings; you want to be aware of bikes, cars, dogs and other people around you. We would advise not listening to music when out running in the dark at all.

Leave any valuables at home, as they are unnecessary. You don't need to run with jewellery or your latest gadgets, so to avoid unwanted attention, limit what you carry, or invest in a bag or running belt to hide these items away. People are not always as polite or innocent as we would like them to be, so keep valuables tucked away, and brush up on some self-defence skills to make you feel safer and more prepared for any unwanted attention that you hopefully will never come across.

Another simple way to avoid unwanted attention from people who may be out to mug you is to vary your running routine. Try to avoid running the same routes at the same time each week, as it keeps your running spontaneous, more interesting and you won't be caught off your guard if someone means you harm.

The key to running is to be aware of your surroundings, especially when around moving traffic. If there isn't a pavement, then make sure you face the traffic when you run. Most of all, relax and have fun; these top safety tips aren't supposed to terrify you into never running at night or on your own, but to just be smart when you do and use your instincts. If your head says no, then listen, as your instincts are probably spot on.

Bright jacket

This is the best high-visibility article of clothing to have, as it will protect you from the wind and rain, as well as making you noticeable.



Top tip Tie it up

Keep long hair tied up in a bun or tucked into a hat, not in a ponytail, so people are unable to pull at it. It's a dreadful thought, but if someone did want to mug you, then one hard tug of a ponytail would stop you quickly, allowing them to run off with your valuables.



Lightweight

Not all high-visibility clothing needs to be heavy. Wear a lightweight vest for late summer evenings.

Reflective strips

Pick items of clothing with reflective strips on them for extra flashes of bright bold colours.

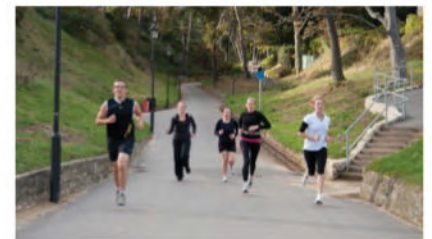
Essential advice for staying safe

1. Extra precautions

If you're a nervous runner, invest in a can of Farb spray; this stains your assailant with a red dye and can scare him/her off. Alternatively, lessons in basic self-defence can also help you feel more safe.

2. Plan ahead

If your route has any danger spots such as poor visibility or alleyways, plan an escape route or an alternative way around. Another solution is to find a running buddy, but always remember to tell someone where you will be running.



3. Unwanted attention

If someone approaches you then instantly move away from them to one side. Don't back up against anything, but move into an empty space if available. Your best line of defence is to shout loudly, question what they want, then shout louder if they continue towards you.

4. Avert attention

Never run with your valuables on show, as if someone does approach you, then the chances are that they want to overpower you for your belongings. With a strong authoritative voice, tell them you have nothing of value and move your body into a defensive position, which they won't be expecting. If you can get past them safely, run as fast as you can towards light, people and safety.

5. Be aware and prepared

The chance of having someone come up to you in a genuinely threatening manner is very small, but as the Scouts like to tell us, it's good to 'always be prepared'.

Beginner's advice for nutrition and hydration

Find out the best food and drinks to stock up on before embarking on your new running lifestyle

Getting your body hydrated and well nourished before as well as after a run is vital. Without the correct balance of nutrients, you won't feel or perform at your best.

When starting out as a runner, you should only need to make small alterations to your diet if you're at a healthy average weight. If you're overweight, then always speak to a doctor before commencing a weight-loss plan, but take on board what we advise in this book to see dramatic results and learn how to train safely.

Preparing your body before a run is like putting fuel into your car. Put the wrong stuff in, such as sugary sweets and biscuits, and you will grind to a standstill with no hope of starting up again. Eating the wrong foods will leave you feeling sluggish, tired and unmotivated, so to feel on top of the world you will need to devise a sensible eating plan that you can stick to and fit into your lifestyle, thus making it easier to stick to.

Best snacks for runners

- ✓ Celery or carrots with a teaspoon of peanut butter
- ✓ A banana
- ✓ Skimmed milk and frozen berry smoothies
- ✓ Low-fat chocolate milk
- ✓ Home-made cereal/protein bars
- ✓ Rice cakes
- ✓ Cherry tomatoes

An hour before running, drink at least a pint of water to replenish your body's supplies. You should aim to drink approximately two litres of water during the day; however, more should be consumed if running. Often, thirst is mistaken for hunger, so keep topping up your water intake throughout the day to keep you full.

You may have read about runners needing to 'carb load', but until you are running over 90 minutes continuously, you shouldn't worry too much about how many carbs your body has in it. To make your running life easier, you will need to make sensible choices when food shopping to ensure that your diet has all the essential nutrients to replenish strength and energy. Pick wisely; wholegrain foods are better than white, and when shopping try to avoid too many processed meals. Stock your cupboards with items like those listed in the 'What's that?' section along the bottom of the page.

Once you've selected the correct foods, it is important to eat correctly in order to feel at your best. Try eating several small meals throughout the day, not just three large heavy meals. Eating too much will leave you feeling heavy and bloated, while you'll find that breaking your foods down into smaller chunks will leave you feeling less hungry, more energetic and ready to exercise.

Food shouldn't become too much of an issue in your daily lifestyle; if you deny yourself the food you love, you will end up cracking and overindulging. Keep your less-healthy food options in moderation so that you still get life's small pleasures guilt-free. Denying yourself treats and eating the same bland foods day in day out can only end with you giving in to your cravings en masse.

Now you know that carbohydrate intake is important to your diet as a runner, as it gives you the energy you require to become a more

Top tip Food diary

Stay on top of what you're eating and drinking by writing it in a diary. Keeping detailed notes on a daily basis will show where you may be failing in your diet, and at what time of day you are giving into temptation. With these factors established, you will learn when best to fuel up to avoid naughty snacking.

productive runner. However, don't neglect other essential food groups. Protein is also a key element to include in your daily diet, as it helps to give your body the energy you need to keep running, and also helps repair any tissue damage caused by training, preventing muscle soreness.

Your dietary focus shouldn't only come before a training session, but also afterwards. You will need to repair any possible training damage and replenish your body in the 30 minutes after finishing your workout. To do this effectively, make sure you include some carbs and protein; a bagel with peanut butter is perfect, or a freshly blended fruit/yoghurt smoothie. The most important thing to do after a run, though, is to rehydrate, restoring any minerals lost through sweating. The best drinks for this task are low-calorie sports drinks if you've had a hard workout, or just plain water.

Further into this book, we look in more depth at specific meals, but for now just pay closer attention to the foods you buy, and try to stock up on the key ingredients mentioned here.

What's that? Runner-friendly carbs: Can be found in sweet potatoes, porridge, brown rice, oats, rye, wholewheat or multigrain pastas and breads, barley,

Good at any time



Wholegrain
= carbs
and fibre



Superfood
booster



Control
what you eat by
home baking



Muscle repair
starts here



Full of
healthy goodness



Berry
nice



Salmon for protein



Add peanut butter
to vegetables and
rice cakes



Lentils make a mean soup



Low-fat veg options



Revert
to your
childhood

Best foods for runners



✓ Wholegrains

Pastas, cereals and bread, which are full of carbs and fibre.

✓ Eggs

Protein-rich, helping the body to repair.

✓ Beans, lentils and quinoa

High in protein and fibre.

✓ Fish

A great protein source; salmon is a great variety, full of good fatty acids.

✓ Sweet potatoes

Rich in vitamins, but also carb-heavy, and taste great mashed or roasted.

✓ Yoghurts

Choose a plain, low-fat option, which is calcium-rich and helps sensitive stomachs. Avoid fancy diet yoghurts, which are high in sugar and additives.

✓ Bananas

A brilliant source of carbs and potassium, and are good to eat before or after a run.

✓ Peanut butter

Choose a peanut butter that consists out of at least 95% peanuts, rather than "peanut butter spread", which is full of additives and sugar, and misses out on all the high protein goodness.

✓ Celery and carrots

Low-fat health-boosting vegetables that are great for snacking on and not piling on the calories. Combine with peanut butter for the ultimate taste good snack.

Foods to avoid

Avoid any mid-run stomach distress by leaving out foods that are high in fat, such as cheese and fried foods, for at least 12 hours before a run. Foods like this sit in your stomach and can cause major disruption – not great when you're miles from home! Caffeine and dairy are other substances best avoided if you're prone to a sensitive stomach when exercising.

bran cereal and beans. The higher the fibre content the better and wholegrain foods are best.

Fit running into your life

We share some top tips and advice on how, when and where to run

Taking up any new hobby means that you'll need to find some time to do it in your no-doubt already busy schedule. If it starts becoming too hard to fit in, then you will skip runs and ultimately quit – which you will regret.

It may already be a tough juggling act to achieve the perfect balance of work and play, but try not to look at running as a chore, or something you 'have' to do. Cleverly incorporating it into your daily life will mean it can be a relaxing, peaceful time spent on your own or with a group of like-minded running folk.

When to run

You may see running as a way to lose weight, for example, but it is also a great stress reliever. To ensure fitting in your runs doesn't ruin the endorphin high, try to fit them in early before work or in the evenings after your day. These are going to be the easiest times of day to fit in a run, but if this isn't possible for you, then work running into your schedule in other ways.

If you can shower at work, try running to work or during your lunch break. The easier option of running home is made simpler if you invest in a running belt or well-fitted bag to help you transport your important items with you. Other possible ways to fit a run into your day is to ditch the car. Walk the kids to school in your gear, then run home.

The possibilities are endless; you just need to make small daily alterations that will take the worry and rush out of trying to set aside a spare hour in your day. For any journey shorter than one mile, choose your trainers over the car. Over a year, this will save you money on petrol, as well as fitting in several small ten-minute jogs – breaking running into mini sessions during the day is as good as one solid 30-minute run when

you are first starting out. The better you get at running, break up longer sessions into two half-hour sets; one in the morning and then one in the evening, for example.

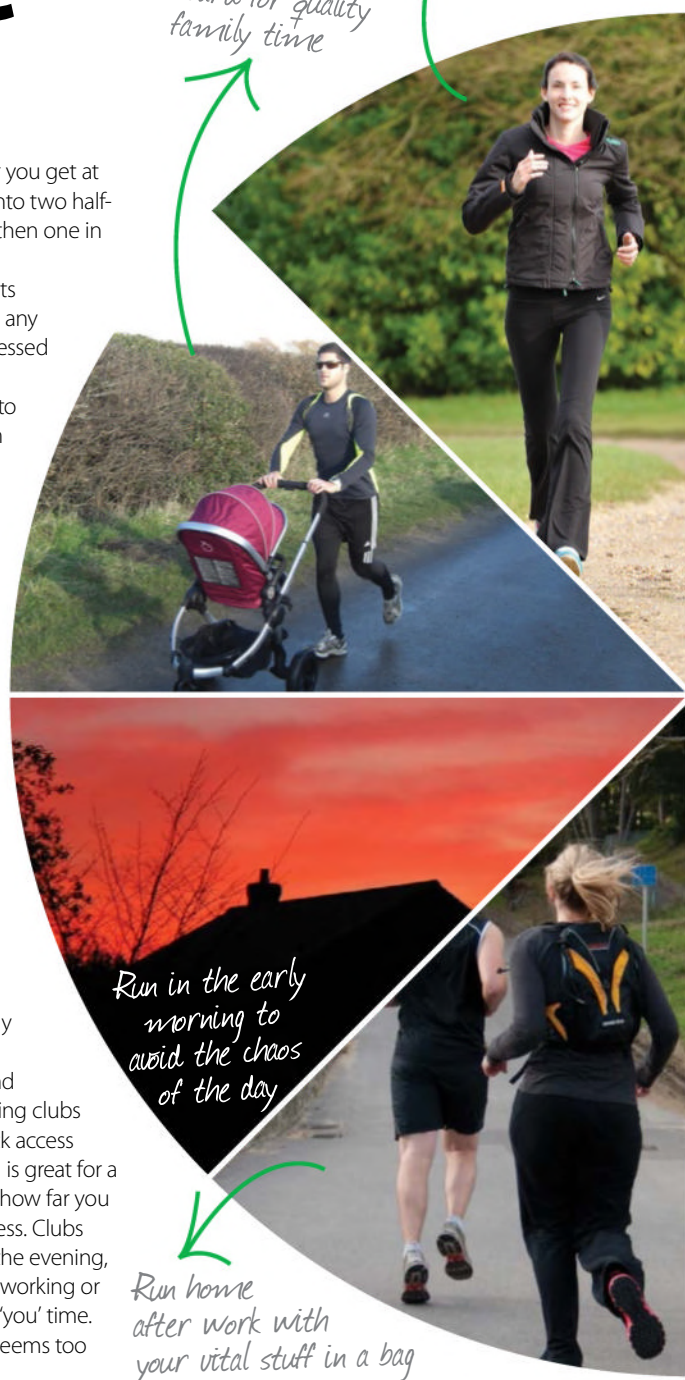
The best thing about running is its versatility; you can run anywhere at any time of the day as long as you're dressed correctly and well hydrated. Early morning runs will only require you to get up 30 minutes or so earlier than usual, but you will see a beautiful peaceful side to your local area that you may not have glimpsed before. Getting up early will get you prepared for your day, and also leave you feeling satisfied that you have done your exercise, so you're free to carry on with your day as planned. It also eliminates the possibility that you will get tired and find an excuse as to why going home after work instead of the gym is preferable.

Where to run

If you're not comfortable running outside on your own, then join a running club or, if you'd like to socialise with other parents, a buggy running club, which will give you the chance to meet new people and experience local routes. Many running clubs run outside, but also have local track access that you can train on. Track running is great for a beginner, as you can judge exactly how far you want to run, and gauge your progress. Clubs don't usually meet until later on in the evening, allowing you time to wind up your working or family day, then have some quality 'you' time. If running with friends or in a club seems too

Ditch the car and run to the shops, then walk back

Get the kids on board for quality family time



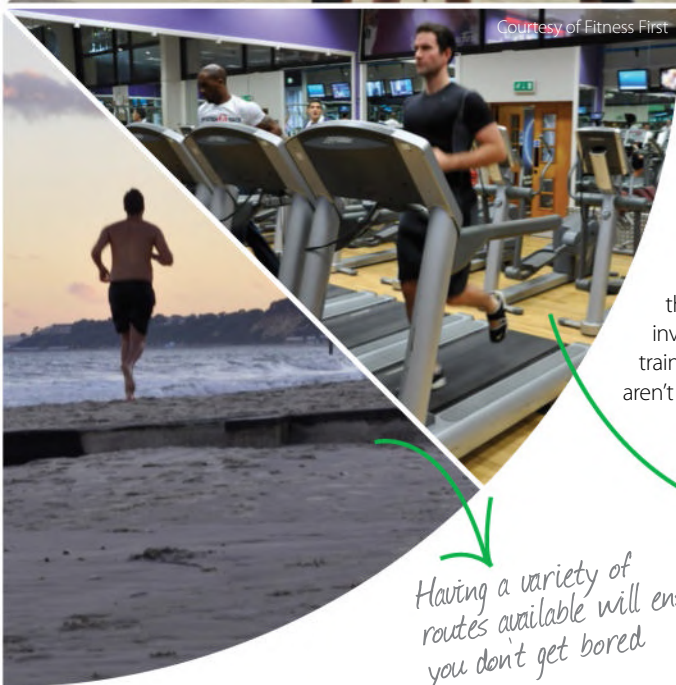
Run in the early morning to avoid the chaos of the day

Run home after work with your vital stuff in a bag

What's that? Endorphin: The feeling of exhilaration felt during times of exercise, stress or fear. This feel-good feeling is what will encourage you to keep working

Go out in the evening; a good chance for some quiet time – just watch where you run

Make your runs a social event by inviting your friends out with you, or join a club



Having a variety of routes available will ensure you don't get bored

Join a gym. Some have crèches available, so utilise these and start building up your running in the warm

daunting as a new runner, then join a gym. Start off with some classes, such as spinning or yoga to stretch out your aching muscles, then start training on the treadmills. Running machines are kinder to your joints, and aren't weather dependant – there goes your 'it's raining' excuse! Treadmills are also great for varying your workout; however, try to run with at least a 1.5-degree incline to represent outdoor terrain.

Fitting running into your life is the biggest hurdle as a new runner. Once you've found the time, the question is where to run so that it's fun. If you can find a few routes of varying lengths and difficulties around your local area, then it will keep your schedule varied, taking away any boredom. Our runs home from work can be a 30-minute tarmac run home along the beach with a hill to end on, or we have the option of a 20-minute off-road track through a park (only a light summer evening option), or we can go the long seven-mile route, which takes us across gravel, tarmac and sand. Having a good selection of routes home means we can see run depending on how good we feel that day, or how much time we have to spend out on the street.

Keep it going

Remember that you want to get out there for a run, and that it should remain your feel-good pastime. Be it a social exercise or your way home from work, once you have got your routine set up, really try to stick to it.

The first step is to just alter your mindset. You don't need to drive everywhere; you can run to the shops then walk back, or even invest in a bike, which is a good cross-training device on the days when you aren't running.

out, and will improve your mood and overall general well-being.

Fit running into your schedule

1. Early morning

Get up 30-45 minutes earlier than normal to fit in a run. Just remember how important warming up and cooling down is; don't sacrifice this for ten extra minutes in bed!

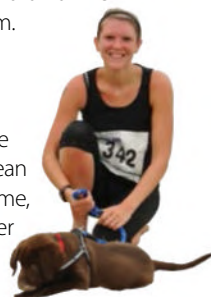


2. Leave the car behind

Drop the kids off at school then run home, or run to or from work. This may require greater planning, ensuring you don't end up carting your worldly goods around, but it will be worth it when you're not stuck in a traffic jam.

3. Run with the family

Take your kids or dog out for a burst of fresh air. Getting the whole family involved will mean no-one misses out on your time, and brings you closer together as a family.



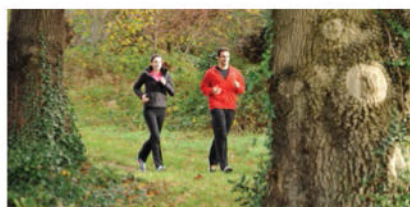
4. Late evening

Not everyone is an early bird. After you're home from work and the family is settled, venture out. Just make sure you don't go too close to bedtime, or you will never nod off with those endorphins pumping.



5. Make it a social event

If your family doesn't want to join you, then drag your friends out with you instead. The time will fly by, and before you know it you will have ran the distance needed.



Common running injuries

Listen to your body to avoid picking up one of these common running injuries, which many people at some point will suffer from

Running puts an enormous amount of pressure on your body, and knowing what aches and pains mean that you need to rest is vital.

Suffering an injury could have you sat on the sidelines for days, weeks or months, and if not treated properly can lead to recurring issues.

Warming-up and cooling down should eliminate the most common pulls and aches, but suffering a proper injury will be down to

your body's biomechanical setup, leading to incorrect running style, training on the wrong surfaces or simply bad trainers. We can't stress enough the importance of purchasing proper running trainers. They are worth every penny, but make sure you visit a specialist running or sports shop to get your knees and feet assessed. They won't stop you from ever getting injured, but they may well prevent you from pulling something in your first session!

Shin splints

If you have pain on the lower inside part of your shin, then it could be a shin splint. It's usually worse at the onset of exercise, and will ease off once the area has warmed up. After training has ended, some swelling and tenderness may

remain and be more noticeable the morning after. It can be caused by the sheer force that running exerts on the legs, made worse if you are not biomechanically sound – as many runners aren't. Being biomechanically sound means that your body functions

in a perfectly balanced, harmonious way. If unbalanced, greater stress is placed on certain parts of your body, and after overuse these problems will flare up. Wearing perfectly fitted running trainers can correct alignment issues, and thus prevent shin splint injury. Try adding arch supports or shock-absorbing inner soles to your trainers to take away some of the impact. It is important to get shin splints diagnosed by a professional, as it could be something more serious, like a stress fracture. Once diagnosed, shin splints are treatable. At the first sign of pain, ice and elevate the leg to reduce swelling and stretch out the lower leg muscles to relieve pain. Lay off the running for a few days, and replace with swimming or cycling so that no excess pressure is placed on the area. If the pain continues, try wearing a pair of compression socks to keep the area contained and warm; that will reduce the strain on the muscles when training. Also, try running on softer ground, such as sand or grass, till the pain has vanished.

Top tip: Never dramatically increase your training plans. Increase workloads gradually to give your body chance to adapt and get used to the extra strain being imposed on it.

Runner's knee

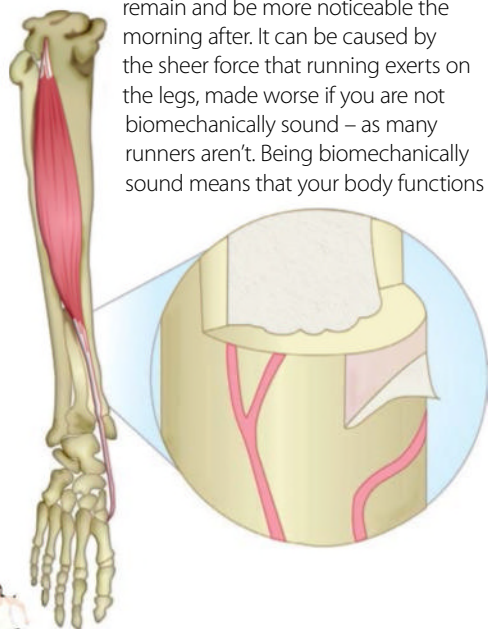
Runner's knee affects up to ten per cent of all runners. With this injury, you could experience pain on the outer edge of the knee joint, just below it, or in the centre of the kneecap. Pain may travel up the thigh or down the shin and will feel worse during a run. Rest can make this feel better, but without proper treatment it will continue to flare up.

It can occur from misaligned kneecaps, dislocation, flat feet, tightness in the thigh muscles or simply overuse – gradually increasing distance will help to avoid problems. Stretching adequately, working specifically on the glutes, calves, quads and hamstrings, will ensure everything is in correct working order.

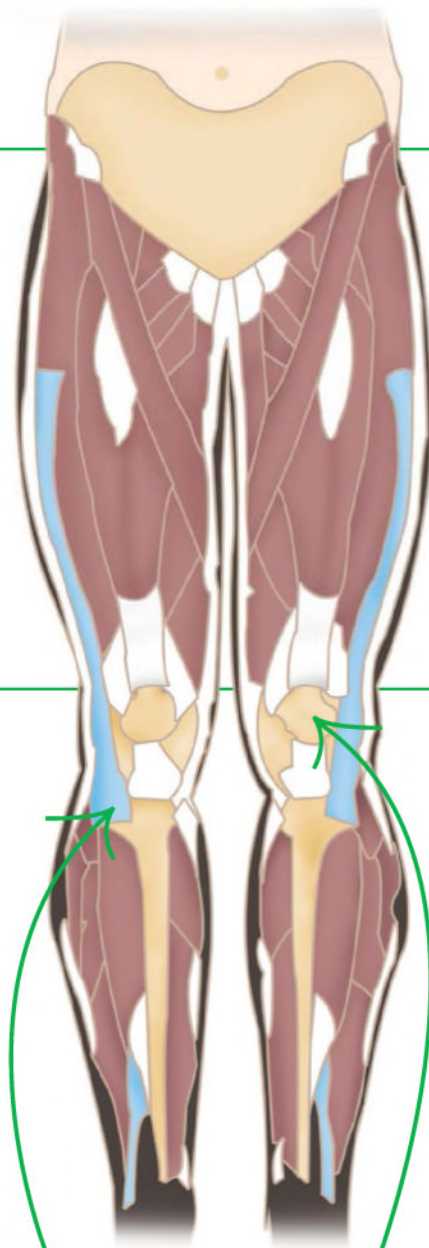
If you do suffer from runner's knee, it could also be down to poor biomechanics and the way your muscles and joints move. Wearing correctly fitting trainers could put the problem to rest, but a specialist running store can help you with this in greater detail depending on how your feet roll and knees rotate when running.

To relieve the symptoms of runner's knee, ice the area immediately after running to reduce any inflammation, and take some anti-inflammatories such as Ibuprofen. If the pain persists, then regular physio treatment can cure it, and should stop it recurring.

Top tip: Stretching is underrated and is an easy thing to fit in to your day. The more you stretch, the stronger your muscles will become, and will greatly decrease the chance of getting injured.



What's that? Pronation: If your feet arch normally, when you run your foot should rotate inwards, slightly distributing the force of running evenly.



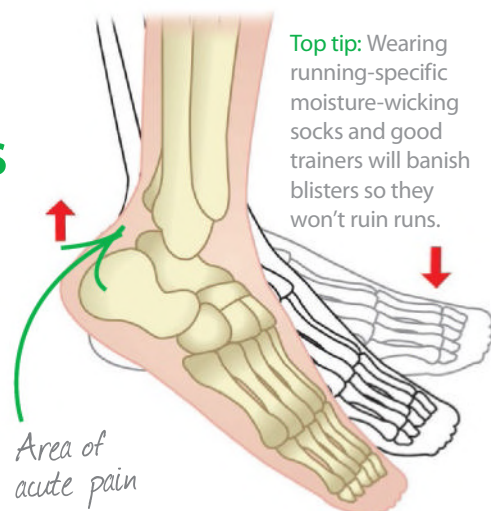
Iliotibial Band

Patella

Area of acute pain

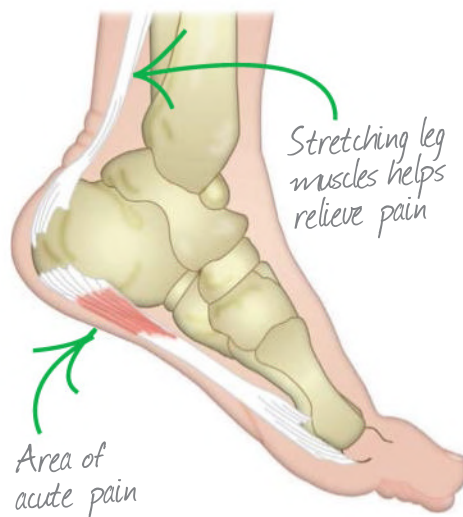
Achilles tendonitis

The Achilles tendon is the tissue that connects the heel to the calf muscles. It is the thickest and strongest tendon in the body; it has to be, considering the force and strain put upon it when a person walks, let alone runs. Pain and stiffness in the heel and back of the ankle has probably arisen from overuse, improper running style, poor footwear, overtight muscles or just a slip of the ankle. Make sure you work out regularly and stay at a healthy weight to avoid extra pressure. This injury can come on suddenly, and leave you unable to exercise for months, so stop as soon as pain flares up, elevate and ice. If the area is sore after a few days rest, then get it seen to by a doctor.



Top tip: Wearing running-specific moisture-wicking socks and good trainers will banish blisters so they won't ruin runs.

Running on softer surfaces such as gravel tracks and grass can relieve Achilles pain, but avoid overly soft surfaces like sand, as this will put too much pressure on the already sore area.



Stretching leg muscles helps relieve pain

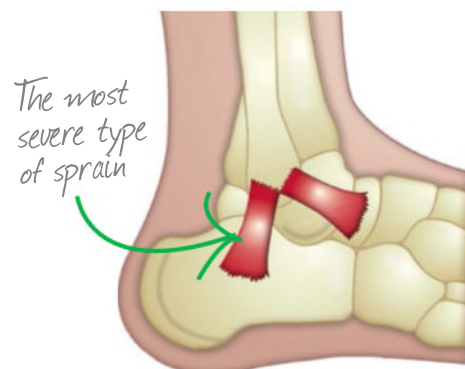
Area of acute pain

Plantar Fasciitis

This is pain located on the underside of your feet, or focused more in the heel area, and is caused by an inflammation in the Plantar Fascia, which runs along the whole length of your foot. It can be caused by wearing incorrect trainers with not enough arch support, allowing the foot to roll over too much when running (pronation). The main relief for this type of injury is to stretch out the whole of the leg and feet effectively. To stretch the underside of the foot, pull the toes up towards the shin, hold for 30 seconds, then release and repeat several times. Get deep into the tendon area by rolling your foot over a tennis ball.

Ankle sprain

Often a result from a slight slip or pull when running on uneven surfaces or in bad weather, there is no preparation you can do to prevent this. Warming up before running will make sure your body is ready to perform and muscles stretched, limiting the amount they can be shocked by. You will know if you have a sprain by the sudden pain at the time of it happening, followed quickly by rapid bruising and swelling. If you have severe pain, you may have also caused some tendon or ligament damage. Pulling the top anterior ligament is the less serious one. After the incident, apply the RICE



The most severe type of sprain

technique: Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. Never ice directly onto the skin, and for no more than 20 minutes. Do this several times a day for at least 48 hours after the accident.

Running communities

Make new friends, share running stories and get top tips and advice by joining one of the many online running communities

Running can be quite a solitary sport, but the running community as a whole is thriving. Running clubs are a great way to meet fellow runners and make new friends, and there is bound to be at least one club near you. However, you might not be able to commit to a running club, or you might not feel ready to go out running with others, so luckily there is a huge online running presence too.

There are a lot of benefits to being part of an online running community. When you are first starting out, you are likely to have a lot of questions and it is good to have someone to ask. If you are injured, then knowing that there are fellow runners who will guide you through can be a real help, especially if they have had the same problem and can offer you motivation to get better. You also get more confidence to ask things that you might not do face-to-face.

One common problem that we hear about from new runners is a lack of support or understanding from friends and relatives who do not run. They might see running as a chore and not realise the importance of it in your life, and they might find it hard to empathise when you can't run and feel frustrated, for example. In any online community, you are sure to find someone who does get what you are feeling at any time of day. Also, they are good to push you out the door when you don't feel like running; if you tell the virtual world you are planning a run, then you have to explain to them why you didn't do it if you pull out – usually that's enough to get us out there in the first place!

Find new running friends

Online running communities are a good way to be able to chat to like-minded people, share tips, get advice and make new friends. Runners are known for being welcoming and supportive to fellow runners of all abilities, and this really comes across in these groups. There are groups

tailored for specific types of people and some are more general.

One of the most popular is Fetch Everyone (www.fetcheveryone.com), which has over 17,000 users. You can use it to track your training and maintain an online log of your progress. You can also build a profile of past races you have competed in, and future races you are planning to attend. You can be part of the league tables, write and read race reviews and see who else is attending the same events. There are options to find runners near you, so you can arrange to meet up for runs if you are looking for a partner, and the site is constantly updated with new features. The community members are often known as 'Fetchies' and you can even get Fetch Everyone kit!

Stay motivated

If you like to feel challenged, then The Running Bug (therunningbug.co.uk/) is a great site. It is aimed at mass runners, not elites, and you can log your runs to earn Bugmiles. There are prizes awarded each month based on your Bugmiles and you get monthly goals to keep you on track. There are various challenges throughout the year that you can contribute to, with the chance to win things like GPS watches and more.

Another way to stay motivated is to write about your experiences as a runner. For instance, realbuzz.com (www.realbuzz.com/) is a great place to start, as it is a healthy living website where you can start your own blog. It is multi-sport, so it is a good place to talk about other forms of fitness that you're interested in as well as running. It is good to read other people's blogs too, as you can find people that you identify with and see how they have overcome the same challenges that you might be facing.

If you do like to read other people's running stories, then the aptly titled The Running Stories (therunningstories.com/) is filled with 'Why

I run' features. These can be emotional and amusing in equal parts, but they make you realise how passionate people are about running and what drives them to continue. The site is always looking for new contributions, so why not get in touch and share your own story?

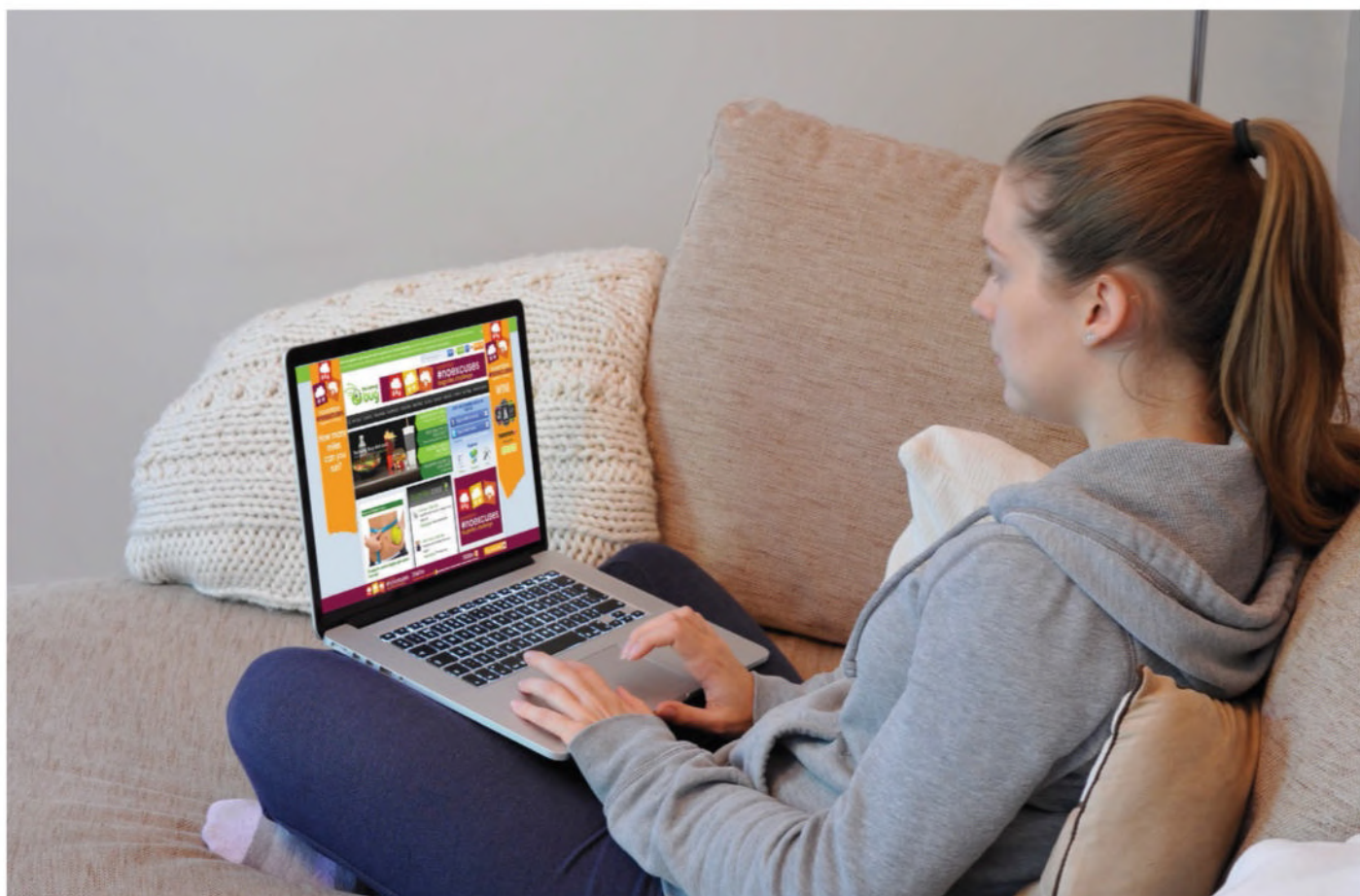
Targeted communities

If you are a particular kind of runner or like a certain type of event, then you can look into more specific running communities, which cover everything from trail running enthusiasts to those chasing a super-speedy time over 5K. One group that is going from strength to strength is Run Mummy Run™ (www.runmummyrun.co.uk), which is an online community for ladies, in particular mums (though they welcome any running women), that combines an informative website with a buzzing Facebook following. The group offers support, advice and a safe place to talk about literally any issue related to running, no matter how embarrassing. The community hosts its own social events and members are encouraged to meet up at events around the country in person.

Online running clubs

To go a step further, there are even online running clubs. These function in the same way as a traditional running club, except that they don't have a physical presence. The admin is the same and the benefits, in particular discounts for affiliated members when entering races, are just as if you were part of a normal running club. These groups have kit, enter races and chat online, so it is a good option if you are nervous about joining a running club, or if you can't find the time to be at a set place, at a set time every week. Ones that worth looking at include UKnetrunner (www.uknetrunner.co.uk/) and the Fetch Everyone Running Club (www.fetcheveryone.com/ferc.php).





How a running community helped me



About the runner

Name: Vicky Dickson

Age: 38

Most memorable running experience:

Started running in May 2013 and since completed a half-marathon, as well as 5K parkrun events. Member of the Run Mummy Run™ online community

I started running in May 2013. I was encouraged to get the C25K podcast and in June I had completed the programme. I was introduced to Run Mummy Run® just in the nick of time. I had managed to run 11.4 miles in training, but was unable to put my foot to the floor and was in real pain. I went to see physio and was told I had Plantar Fascitis. I was devastated as I had achieved so much and I had signed up for the Brighton Marathon based on my 11.4-mile achievement.

Forum support

"It took me six weeks to recover and I had to start from scratch. The ladies have been a great support, with practical advice as well as the emotional support I needed. In October, I got one step closer to my dream and I ran my first-ever race Stroud Half Marathon in 2:12:12. I am still in shock. I know I wouldn't have had the confidence to run it on my own if I hadn't been for the ladies.

"I like that Run Mummy Run™ is a female-only forum and that there is always someone who

has had a similar experience. Where else would I get practical advice on black nail polish [to cover a] black toenail? I have also met another mum through the forum and enlisted another to the forum, and we have formed a team – 100k is now on the agenda for the end of June."

My advice

"[My advice for others is to] believe in yourself. Find out what it is you want to achieve or what motivates you and focus on that. It may be running with friends, escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life, or because you want to improve your overall health and fitness.

"Concentrate on these things when you are finding it difficult – not the pace, speed or distance. These will come with time."

"My advice for others is to believe in yourself"

Health & fitness

40

*Find out if you're
fit enough to
start running*

Health & fitness

Whether you want to lose weight, get fit or stay healthy,
we have all the tips and tricks you need to reach your goals

34 The benefits of running

How running helps your health

40 Are you fit to run?

Make sure you are ready to run

44 Prevent common injuries

Advice for staying healthy

48 Importance of carbs

A runner's best friend

46 Nutrition for runners

How to eat the best foods

50 Sports nutrition

What's the benefit of sports products?

52 Beat the bulge

Top advice for weight loss results

56 Surfaces

Where you run can make a big impact

58 Running for women

Tailored tips for female eyes only

60 Running for men

Tailored tips for male eyes only



58 *Top tips for females
who like to run*



56 *Different surfaces bring
different benefits*



Courtesy of Fitness First

52 Running can help you reach your ideal weight



54 Discover which foods will give you more energy

34 Doing exercise can boost your confidence and relieve stress



The benefits of running

Running has a lot of benefits, both physical and mental.
Here, we run through the key advantages

Any form of physical exercise will help to improve both your physical and emotional wellbeing when performed on a regular basis.

Having made the decision to start running regularly, it pays to know exactly what good you are doing for your mind and body, as this will help you to stay motivated and ensure your long-term fitness.

Running is the perfect sport to take up, whatever your reasons for doing so. It is cheap and easy to get started; all you need is some sports gear and a pair of trainers, and the world is your oyster. You can start running at any time, anywhere; alone or with friends; with the dog and over the fields; on the road or around the park. It fits into your daily schedule no matter how busy you are and it makes no demands

on you apart from those that you set. Literally anyone can run; it just takes that first step. It might not feel easy to begin with, and you'll initially spend a lot of time walking rather than running, but progression is fast and the physical benefits start from day one.

Stay a healthy weight

There are many reasons why people get into running in the first place, but one of the most common is weight loss. Obesity is a serious problem in the developed world (see the 'Weighty matters' boxout on p37), particularly in the UK and US. As well as leading to a whole range of future health problems, it also causes sluggishness and lack of motivation. By taking up running you are taking control of the problem, but it's not going to be an easy ride.

If you have never exercised before and you are obese, then you will need to start out nice and slowly. The extra weight that you are carrying will put more stress on your joints than a person of a healthy weight, making it harder to run. You will need to start losing some weight from the outset before you can really begin a running program. This means taking control of the diet side of things and increasing day-to-day activity. Even small steps like walking part of the way to work, taking the stairs instead of the lift or doing the housework vigorously will build up and kick-start weight loss. Stick to three healthy meals a day and two snacks, made up of plenty of fruit and veg, wholegrain carbohydrates and protein.

Once the weight starts to come down, you can begin a proper run/walk program, which

Top tip

Live longer

Running can help to stave off some factors of old age, such as late-onset diabetes, strokes, obesity, heart problems, osteoporosis and more. It helps our bodies stay younger on the inside, and maintains muscle strength and tone. You can add years by starting and keeping up a regular fitness regime.

The key health benefits

How running helps you from the inside out

Healthy heart

Running, as with any form of regular exercise, helps to maintain a lower blood pressure. The exercise increases the heart rate and blood flow, which makes arteries expand and contract more vigorously. This keeps them more 'elastic', which is what helps to lower blood pressure. The heart is a muscle like any other, so regularly working it will keep it healthier, therefore reducing the risk of things like heart disease.

Lung capacity

Lungs are worked hard when running and they benefit from the additional exercise, helping to strengthen them and increase their capacity. This means that the more you work your lungs, the less out of breath you will feel. This can help prevent breathing problems as you get older. If you are asthmatic, increasing your lung capacity through exercise can help to manage and reduce symptoms. If you have recently given up smoking, running can help restore the health of your lungs and recover some of the damage caused.

Lower body fat

Too much body fat can lead to all sorts of problems, such as an increased risk of stroke, heart attack and diabetes. Even a slim-looking person can have too much internal fat around their organs, putting them at risk, so it is worth having a doctor check your body fat percentage (there are also machines that do this in some pharmacies), so that you can work, through running, to decrease this and give your body a clean sheet.

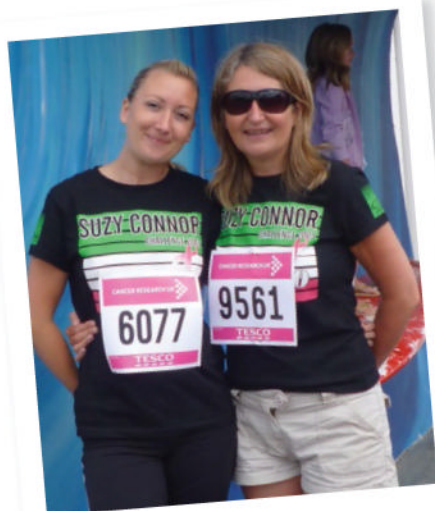
Bone density

Running is a weight-bearing exercise, which helps to increase bone density and prevent the onset of osteoporosis in later life. This means that the chance of things like stress fractures also decreases. Help increase bone strength through your diet, too, by making sure that you get plenty of calcium through dairy products and leafy green veg.

Top tip

Treat yourself

When it comes to getting fit, you need to reward yourself for meeting goals to help stay motivated. Set yourself mini targets and when you reach them, treat yourself to a dinner out, a new piece of kit, or a night in with a takeaway and a good film. Just make sure that you don't treat yourself too often!



Join together with friends



Stay fit with the family

will be mostly walking, rather than running, until your fitness improves. Wear proper sports kit and running trainers, even when you're walking at the beginning, as you want to ensure that you don't injure yourself and throw yourself off course. As you get fitter and healthier, you can begin to partake in longer runs and speedwork, which both help the weight to fall off.

If you're carrying just a little extra weight, then you will progress more quickly. While you still need to build up your fitness, you can start running much sooner. If you only have a little weight to lose, then it will come off more slowly. At first, you may see a small weight increase as your body begins to build muscle, but in the long term you will see results. Maintaining a healthy weight is something that you need to keep up for life, as it will help you to ward off medical complications and help you live longer. This means you need to ensure that your running program is both varied and adapted to your new fitness every four to six weeks. Hitting

that feels the strain of ageing, which is why the risk of heart disease, strokes and angina increases. These are known as cardiovascular risks, and you can help lower your chances of suffering by ensuring that you are regularly working your heart muscles by increasing heart rate through cardiovascular exercise. As well as strengthening the heart itself by increasing and decreasing heart rate, you are forcing the arteries to expand and contract to let the blood flow, which keeps them elastic. Exercise improves your circulation as well, which helps to reduce the chance of blood clots in the future, which can cause strokes and heart attacks.

Cholesterol is also a big problem these days, with high levels causing fatty deposits to build up in the heart, leading to heart disease. Running has been shown to increase 'HDL' levels, which is 'good' cholesterol. These transport the fat away from the heart and back to the liver, where it is processed. If you do suffer from high levels of cholesterol, then you

"Running burns off more calories than almost any other physical activity"

a plateau will mean that the weight loss stops. Your goal is to get down to a healthy weight and then stay there, which regular running will help to ensure. As you lose weight, you will find that your energy levels go through the roof, making you more productive on a day-to-day basis, and you will sleep better too. Rest assured that you have made the right decision to take up running; it burns off more calories than any other physical activity, bar cross-country skiing!

Prevent health problems

Even if you're not starting to run because of a weight issue, then there are plenty of benefits that running can give you. Many of these are preventative and stop the onset of common problems associated with the ageing process. As we get older, our bone density decreases, our muscle strength and tone starts to reduce, and we are at a higher risk of illness like cancer and diabetes. Unfortunately, there is no miracle cure to stop us ageing, but by maintaining health and fitness from a younger age, we can put ourselves in good stead for the future. Think of your fitness as a pension plan – the more you put in, and the earlier you start contributing, the bigger the rewards when you're older. Your heart, in particular, is a muscle

will need to manage it through diet as well as exercise, but it is a condition that is reversible, and will set you up for a healthier future if dealt with soon enough.

Other than the heart, running helps protect your health in many other ways. For a start, it boosts the immune system by increasing the amount of white blood cells. As well as ensuring that you don't suffer from common colds and flu, by having a stronger immune system you will combat the early onset of more serious afflictions like cancer and diabetes. It also means that you will recover more quickly from illness, and can recover more quickly after childbirth or an operation, for example.

Your lungs will benefit from any form of exercise. Running forces your lungs to work by pushing air in and out rapidly. This will, over time, increase your lung capacity, making them work more efficiently. If you are a smoker (and we recommend giving up if you're going to start running), then it will help to undo a little of the damage that you're doing. If you've given up, running will start to repair your lungs and decrease the risk of smoking-related lung diseases. Asthmatics also benefit from exercise, as it naturally increases lung capacity and can alleviate the symptoms, reducing the frequency



Being the right weight can make a massive difference to your health

Courtesy of Fitness First.

Weighty matters

We explore what's so important about staying a healthy weight

Obesity, where excessive body fat reaches the point that it can have an adverse affect on our health, is a common problem around the world, with a huge proportion of people in the developed world tipping the scales in the wrong direction. Being the appropriate weight for your height and build is essential to your future health. Obesity has been linked to an increased risk of serious medical conditions, including heart disease, strokes, breathing

problems, diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Luckily, it is possible to reverse this risk through regular exercise, with running being one of the most effective forms if done every week.

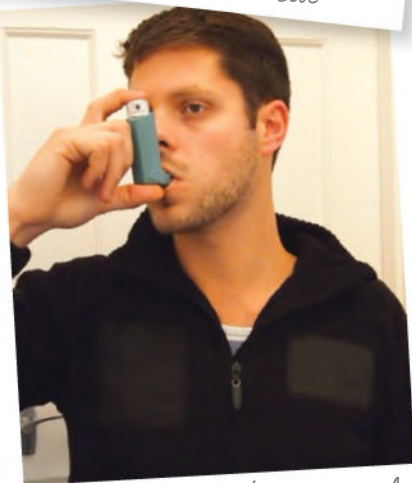
It's also important to be aware of where you store fat. Fat around the abdomen is considered more dangerous than fat on the thighs and buttocks. This is why a good measure of healthy weight is the waist to hip

ratio (WHR). This is a simple guide that involves measuring the waist circumference and the hips then dividing the former by the latter. Abdominal obesity is defined as a WHR of above 0.9 for men and 0.85 for women. For men, the WHR is less pronounced, and around 0.9 is considered a healthy ratio. For women, however, where the hips are designed to be more pronounced, a lower WHR of 0.7 is considered optimum for health and fertility.



Run for charity to give you a mental boost

Be wary of consuming sports drinks if diabetic



Carry your inhaler in case of a sudden attack

that an inhaler is needed. Just make sure that you always carry your inhaler with you and stop if you feel an attack coming on.

Finally, running is a weight-bearing exercise. This means that it will help you to increase your bone density, making bones stronger and less prone to breakages. This can help prevent the onset of osteoporosis, which is common as bone density decreases with age. It also helps you to prevent injury and stress fractures, and able to cope better with the impact of running on hard surfaces.

All of these various health benefits lead to a longer, healthier life and there is no reason to stop as you get older. Indeed, you will see people in their eighties and nineties lining up at the start of marathons!

Keep illness at bay

As well as preventing the onset of certain illnesses in the first place, exercise can be used to help manage the symptoms of existing medical problems too.

For example, those with Type 2 diabetes are encouraged to exercise to help with blood sugar control and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Muscles that are being used for running use up more glucose than when they are at rest, leading to greater sugar uptake and a lower blood sugar level. While the benefits of running for diabetics is clear, sufferers do need to be more careful than a medically healthy runner. For a start, it is important that those on blood-sugar-lowering medication control their carbohydrate levels carefully, making sure that they eat enough relative to exercise so that the blood sugar level doesn't suddenly come crashing down. Also, diabetics should be careful when using sports drinks or sports snacks, as these can often be laden with sugars and carbohydrates that can dramatically affect blood sugar levels.

Asthmatics are another group of people who can be helped through exercise, but again precautions need to be taken. Running will help to increase lung capacity, which can reduce

breathing difficulties. However, exercise-induced asthma can lead to worsening symptoms during and after running, which is an indication that your medication needs to be re-evaluated. Seek the advice of a doctor before starting a running program, as they will help plan how much running, and at what intensity, it is safe for you to do. It can help to use your inhaler just before you set off for a run, as this will open up your lungs ready for the extra exertion needed. Always ensure that you have your inhaler with you for the duration of your run, and if you are running with someone else, make sure that they know of your condition.

More serious conditions can sometimes be helped with exercise, but this needs to be under the supervision of a qualified professional. Exercise referral programs exist in the UK and other countries for those with specific conditions that can be helped with

and mental stamina, thanks to the increased blood flow to the brain.

Two of the most common mental health problems in the world are depression and insomnia. Often, running can help with the treatment of both. For those suffering from depression, those magical endorphins that are released when running are helpful in mood control. One common cause of depression can be a lack of self-worth and lower self-esteem. Running is predominantly goals-based, meaning that you are working towards achieving something. By monitoring progress and seeing the results, this can help you to feel more motivated in other areas of your life, proving that you are capable of achieving anything that you put your mind to.

Insomnia is a tricky disorder to treat, as there are so many reasons behind it. However, exercise can help to relax the body and

“Running in the evening helps to settle the body after a long day at work”

regular exercise, including diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis. These schemes help you to build up to the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week – which is a good benchmark for us all to aim for as a minimum weekly exertion.

Stay happy and stress free

The benefits of running are not just physical. There are a myriad of mental and emotional pros to this sport. For a start, it is proven that exercise helps to reduce stress, which in today's busy lifestyles, packed with family, work and more, is a real bonus. It gives you time to yourself to reflect on the day's problems and issues, helping you to work through them and to leave them behind. This is why many people prefer to run after work; to help bridge the gap between working life and home life.

By exercising, you increase the serotonin in your brain, which is a chemical that helps to lift your mood, making you feel more positive. It can also make you more productive, as you can approach problems calmly and find reasonable solutions without stress. This is why exercise is often prescribed by doctors to help with stress and anxiety-related disorders. Not only that, the decisions and solutions that you come up with during or after running are likely to be better quality, as running helps to sharpen your focus

encourage sleep, and is often recommended to sufferers. Running in the morning can help to shake away the tired effects of a restless night, which can help with performance during the day. However, if you feel over-tired, then the quality of your run will not be as good and you may lose form, leading to possible injury. Running in the evening helps to settle the mind after a long day at work and also tires the body to aid sleep. Just bear in mind that after running you will feel more awake and your heart rate will be increased, so you will need to ensure that you leave around three hours before finishing a run and going to bed so that you have time to recover. Also, consider that you need to re-fuel as soon as you finish your run, as you don't want to eat too close to bedtime or your digestion churning away will keep you awake.

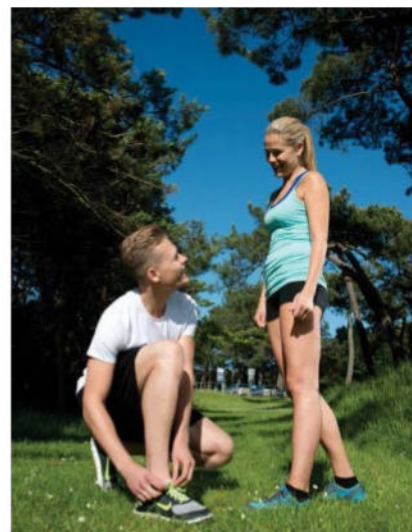
Running regularly improves your physical appearance too, which can help with motivation, mood, self-esteem and more. Your improved circulation will give you healthy skin and glowing cheeks, and the exercise will tone your body and reduce excess weight. When you feel good about the way you look, you will feel better on the inside too.

Hopefully, you will feel encouraged to take control of your mental and physical wellbeing through running. Take it up now and enjoy a longer, healthier life.

Healthy body, healthy mind

Running has as many mental benefits as it does physical

Running releases endorphins, the 'feelgood' chemicals, so it is no wonder that exercise is often prescribed by doctors to help manage common mental health issues, such as stress, anxiety, insomnia and depression. These chemicals include Dopamine and Serotonin, both of which have the effect of raising your mood and making you feel generally happier. Running can help to improve self-esteem, body image perception and feelings of isolation, as well as helping to relieve stressful thinking, which in turn leads to better sleep. As well as the chemical reactions caused by running, having a goal in mind helps you to focus on something positive and you can work towards this, which helps with motivation and a sense of purpose. It is important to note that exercise is not a 'cure' for these issues, which often have deep-set causes. If you suspect that you are suffering from a mental illness, then you do need to visit your doctor, as you may require medication or counselling, or a combination of both. However, running can help you with the day-to-day management of this issues, especially if they are short-term problems.



Are you fit to run?

Before you start to run, make sure you have gone through this checklist to ensure you're as fit as can be to avoid injury or other health complications

The first thing you must do before embarking on running as a lifestyle choice is to speak to a health professional, and make sure you feel 100 per cent fit, healthy and prepared with all the best advice possible.

Running puts a lot of pressure on your body, and is physically demanding, especially when you're just starting out, so be very aware of any niggling pains that crop up. If you have any health conditions that may affect your running, such as pregnancy, being over- or underweight, heart troubles, high blood pressure or diabetes, always speak to your GP for advice before embarking on a training program.

Devising a running training plan will differ depending on what your reasons for running are. The biggest motivation is weight loss, and choosing a training plan suited to your physical needs is vital. If you're overweight, then building up your running gradually over a longer period of time at a slower pace is necessary.

When you visit the doctors, they will assess your height, weight and blood pressure, so if you are starting to run because you want to lose weight, then tell them, and they will be able to offer advice regarding any dietary alterations, or other tips to aid you in your program.

If you're currently overweight, then running will put a far greater pressure on your heart and body. For a few weeks before starting a running training plan, walk regularly three to four times a week, slowly increasing the pace until you feel ready to add a few short bursts of speed – the walk/run method is the best plan, so see page 18 for more information.

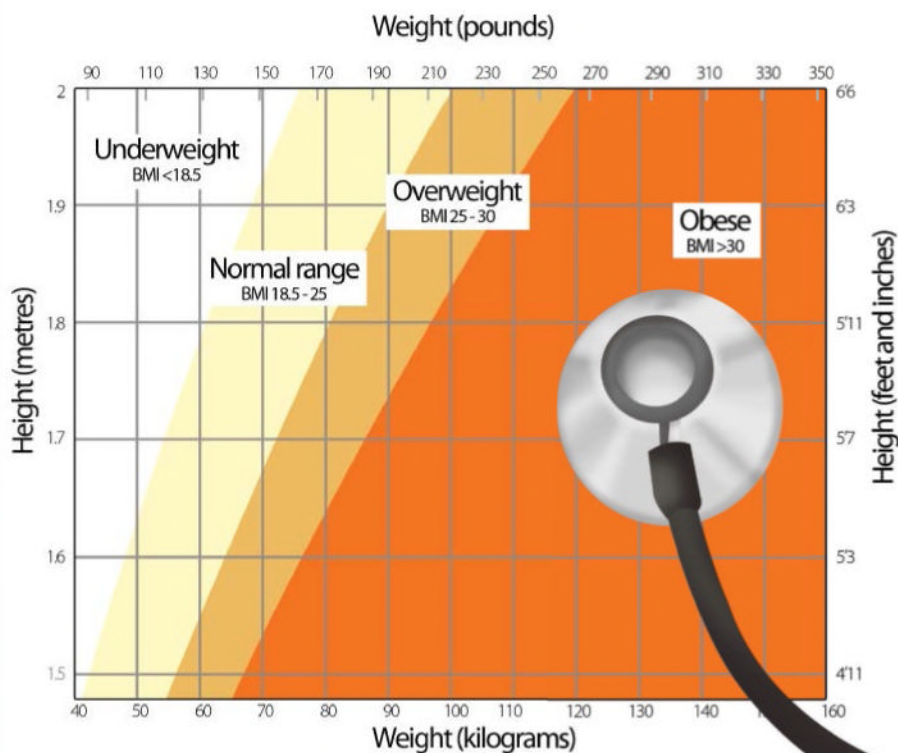
Read through the checklist, and ensure you follow our advice to be as safe as possible.



Gauge your health

The Body Mass Index is a gauge for weight management. It is calculated based on your weight divided by the square of your height. While it's a useful guide for beginners, it treats all weight, whether healthy muscle or unwanted fat, the same. There are alternatives, such as the waist-to-hip ratio, which works

on the theory that too much abdominal fat causes major health problems, or the body fat percentage, which is done on a machine that works out how much of your weight is 'fat', separating it from muscle. You can find these machines in health stores and pharmacies, and there are at-home models, too.



Healthy running

Follow these quick tips when you're first starting out as a runner:

- Don't overdo it
- Build up gradually
- Take walking breaks to catch your breath
- Don't run if feeling unwell
- Keep a running log and record how you feel
- Relax and run with friends
- Enjoy yourself
- Eat healthily
- Get plenty of sleep
- Run regularly to beat the aches



Checklist

Before running visit a health professional and make sure you have ticked all of these boxes



Height and weight

You can use these figures to calculate your BMI, which is one test of health. However, if you are lean and muscular, your BMI might be high, even though you are perfectly healthy.



Blood pressure

Maintaining an active lifestyle can lower blood pressure, but take it easy to begin with. Build up slowly and don't let yourself get too out of breath. Stop before exhaustion hits.



Waist-to-hip measurement

A more useful BMI alternative. Measure waist and hips to get your ratio (divide the former by the latter), which shouldn't be more than 0.8 for women and 0.95 for men.



Lung capacity

Your lung capacity will increase with training, resulting in you getting breathless less easily. A doctor will assess how much air your lungs can take and if there are any underlying issues.



Pregnancy

Exercise can be done, but only if your body is used to it. Don't start a running plan if you have never done it before as it is too intense. Try cycling, walking or swimming instead.



Pick your training plan

Choose a plan suited to your age, body weight and fitness level. Don't overdo it; slow and steady is the key to achieve your targets.



Diet overhaul

Making changes to what you put into your body will aid in weight loss and fuel you to run. Keep a log of everything consumed in one week to identify problem areas.

Monitor your progress

If you are starting running to change your body shape or lose weight, here are some methods you can use to measure results

Weight loss is a common motivator for new runners. The BMI calculation is often used as a guide to what is a healthy weight but, as we've already mentioned, it's not perfect.

The newer ABSI is somewhat better, as it also incorporates your waist circumference. It has been shown that holding weight around your waist (an 'apple' shape) is worse for your long-term health than storing it in your hips and thighs. Therefore, as well as monitoring your weight, you should keep track of your waist measurement too. In fact, take it further and take measurements from all over your body so that you can see where you are losing weight and toning up.

Don't become a slave to your scales. You may find that you lose weight slowly with running, or even gain it, depending on your starting point. Don't feel disheartened – you may be building new muscle instead. A pound of muscle takes up less volume than a pound of fat, so as you're building heavy muscle tissue (especially in your legs and calves), you might be losing inches. Because of this, you can weigh the same but have a leaner body.

You could measure your body fat percentage instead. Even a very slender person can have too much body fat, putting them at risk of future health problems. A slim body type with a high fat percentage often suggests that fat is stored between internal organs, which is a worrying prospect. Aiming to lose a certain percentage in body fat may be more beneficial to your health than aiming to lose a certain amount of weight, as we previously mentioned that muscle tissue weighs more than fat tissue. Some home scales now calculate this, or those in pharmacies and gyms can offer the option. However, these aren't all that accurate, and results can wildly vary depending on how much water you are carrying. You could also get some 'calipers' (they don't cost much online), which are more accurate, as you literally grasp the fat and measure it.

What's a good body fat percentage?

We've already mentioned a couple of ways you can measure your body fat percentage (electronic scales and calipers). There are also many online calculators, which can vary in their accuracy, so don't be alarmed if a shocking percentage comes up. You can get a body composition test done, but it is expensive and often unnecessary. We suggest

picking one method you're happy with and sticking with it – you can see progress regardless. Here is a chart that shows you the kind of body fat percentages you are aiming for; note that women biologically need more body fat than men, as they tend to store more fat as fuel for pregnancy. As a runner, you want to aim for the 'fitness' category.

ACE Body Fat % Chart

Description	Women	Men
Essential Fat	10-13%	2-5%
Athletes	14-20%	6-13%
Fitness	21-24%	14-17%
Average	25-31%	18-24%
Obese	32%+	24%+

Lifestyle changes

Don't just focus on your body; there are other benefits to running

- Experience better quality sleep
- Clearer skin that glows
- Higher energy levels throughout the day
- Improved mental health
- Less prone to illness
- Keep the mind sharp
- Generally feel happier
- Increased motivation in other areas
- Build your self esteem
- Add years onto your life

Checklist

Seven ways you can check your health and fitness, and monitor changes to see how running is benefiting you



Resting heart rate

A low resting heart rate indicates a good level of fitness. Find your pulse on your neck, count the beats for 15 seconds and multiply by four. Around 60-100 bpm is healthy.



Find your ABSI

The A Body Shape Index is a new measure of health. It is similar to BMI, but it takes into account where you are carrying weight. See www.absi-calculator.com.



Blood pressure checks

Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure at regular points throughout the year, especially if you suffer with high blood pressure, to see if running lowers it.



Time trial

A simple way to gauge fitness improvements is to perform the same activity on a regular basis. You could measure out a mile and see how long it takes you to run.



Clothing size

Sometimes scales don't tell the whole story. If you're clothes are getting looser, but your weight is staying steady, you could be building muscle instead.



Take measurements

Before you start out, measure your waist, chest, hips and thighs. Re-do the measurements once a month and visually see where you are shedding weight or toning up.



Keep a log

Make note of the above tests in your running log and update them regularly. This way, you can look back and use them as motivation if you hit a plateau.

Prevent common injuries

Don't let an injury sideline you; prepare for all eventualities, and run safe without pain holding you back

Reduce the chance of injury by following our great advice, and say goodbye to long-term timeouts.

Keep the warming up and cooling down routines you have already established for every run that you do, focusing on loosening up the hips, calves, quads and hamstrings. Warming up your body will limit the chance of pulling something, and cooling down will reduce the onset of aches and pains that can leave you sore and unable to train. Stretching out regularly or taking part in a yoga or Pilates class will increase your flexibility and improve your running in the long run.

Paying attention to your body is a must; never push yourself too far. If you experience pain that doesn't subside after a walk break and stretch, then end the session. If you are feeling sore, then either do a small easy run or skip the session completely and go for a swim or bike ride. Resting isn't a bad thing, and it is necessary for a full recovery, even if you're currently feeling fit and well.

Don't rely on running solely as your main fitness source, as overdoing it can lead to injury due to the impact that it puts on your joints. Fit some strength training in so that the muscles are continually strengthening and growing stronger. Other cardio workouts, such as cycling and swimming, are good for this, as they are low-impact, which gives your body a rest from the motion of running. Work on your core muscles, stomach and back for stability; yoga is perfect for targeting these areas. Don't forget to work on the legs and glutes by doing repeats of squats and lunges. Mix all of these exercises with calf raises, heel dips and leg extensions to strengthen the hips plus try to include some weight lifting to tone up and help build stamina. When training, never increase the distance too dramatically.

Once you can run for 20 minutes solidly, gently increase the time by five minutes each week. Never increase the distance per week by more than a mile/kilometre, and continue to slowly build up to your desired distance or time goal. If you find you are struggling, then add in a walk break until you can run the time without stopping.

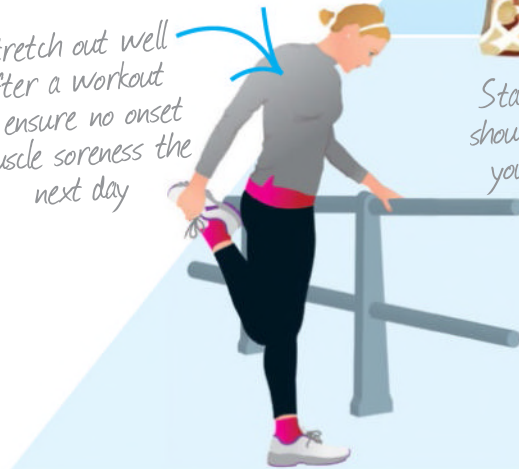
Pyramid to training success

The pyramid technique of training works well. Starting off at base level, slowly decrease and increase your walk/run minutes until you can run 10, 15 and 20 minutes solidly. Once you're at this level, you will have the basic level of fitness to progress to a 5 or 10K goal. Here is a sample pyramid plan to get the best from your training and remain fit and healthy.

Calf raises and heel dips are essential stretches for runners to stay healthy

Stretch out well after a workout to ensure no onset muscle soreness the next day

Static stretches should be part of your cool down



What's that? Cardio: A workout that really gets your heart pumping and blood flowing. It will elevate your pulse and leave you feeling out of breath. This type of



Train your way to victory with this method of training

Target specific areas with weight training



Use lighter weights with more repeats for best results

Level seven

Have a good varied plan. Strength training and stretching is vital, so always include them in your week. Always prepare for races with training like this for best results from you and your body

Level six

Add in some weight training, targeting specific areas: glutes, hips, calves, quads, hamstring and the core. Using a balance ball can help make it more intense.

Level five

Have the occasional rest week. Still cross-train, swim and stretch, but limit your runs to one or two easy ones. Taking a break is beneficial, allowing the body to repair and strengthen.

Taking it easy some weeks is vital to let your body repair and rest itself

Core training is as important as running

Don't give up running completely



Level four

Continue the gradual increase in your running with longer times or further distance. Remember to work on stretching, core strengthening and other cardio activities to keep your overall strength and fitness at a constant level.

Level three

Begin to increase time or distance, by no more than five minutes per week, or 1km/1 mile in distance. Incorporate other less impact-based cardio workouts, such as swimming or cross training.

Keep a varied exercise plan each week



Level two

Increase the running time and decrease the walk breaks gradually by no more than a minute every couple of runs. Introduce more stretching such as hip extensions, calf raises, heel dips, downward dog and bridge.

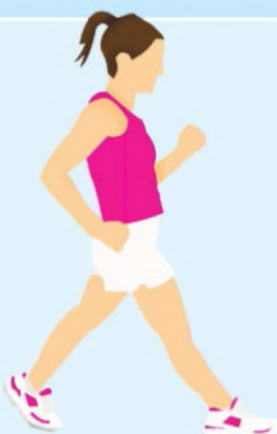


Yoga poses such as these help stretch and strengthen your body



Level one

Start off with the walk/run method, ensuring you warm up and cool down properly.



Lunge walking is an excellent dynamic way to warm up the body, lowering the chance of injury

Top tip

Exercise at home

You don't have to join a gym or go to specific classes that can be costly to strengthen up. Yoga, Pilates and stretching moves can be done at home, and as for weight training use things around the home such as full drinks bottles, jugs of milk, canned foods, or an overweight cat.

Nutrition for runners

Choosing the correct foods and drinks to incorporate into your diet is vital for optimum performance and results

One of the most common things that we hear are people who have taken up running to lose weight, only to find that they are either losing very little or nothing, or have actually gained a pound or two.

While there are plenty of reasons for this, for example muscle gain, it could all be down to bad dietary choices. It is easy to fall into the trap of eating more than you need when you start running. It's also easier to justify 'treats' when you have been exercising.

In order to lose weight, running and good nutrition go hand in hand. Eating the right amount of the right foods will make a big difference. You still need to burn off more than you're putting in to lose weight. Never starve yourself to save calories; just pick better foods.

A good diet needs to have a balance of good carbohydrates, protein and fat. When you are first starting running, you don't need

to worry about carb-loading. You can fuel your runs effectively with fats and protein, and the right carbs. Try and make your diet as 'clean' as possible, which means avoiding processed foods and refined sugars (including many misleading diet products). Lean meats, lots of fruits and vegetables, pulses, grains, nuts, oily fish... all of these should be included in your diet. Aim for three balanced meals a day, with two healthy snacks. Drink plenty of water as well, as this can help with weight loss. Swap to wholemeal bread and pasta, and have brown or wild rice with your dinner – these simple swaps can make a big difference.

If you are feeling hungry, drink a glass of water. In many cases you may feel hungry, but actually be dehydrated. Try drinking a glass of water to see if your hunger vanishes. If you're still peckish after 10-15 minutes, then eat a small snack, like those suggested opposite, to feel full and raring to go.

Top tip

Avoid sports drinks

Sports drinks are marketed towards runners, but unless you are going to be running for over an hour, then stay away from them. You are adding in more calories, carbs and sugars than you need, counteracting the benefits of your running, especially if you are trying to lose weight.

If hungry, have a glass of water to fill the hole

Top 5 tasty treats

1. Carrot sticks

Combine with 1tsp of peanut butter or low-fat hummus for a little extra enjoyment and protein.



2. Bananas

Perfect at any time of day, before or after a run. They also contain high levels of carbohydrates and potassium, both of which are vital to runners at all levels.



3. Fresh fruit

Cut up into a fruit salad, with some fat-free natural yogurt to add sweetness. Blueberries and raspberries are especially healthy, and pop into your mouth like candy.



4. Rye crackers

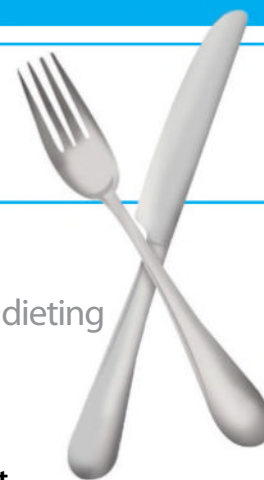
An excellent low-calorie, high-fibre snack and even better with protein-rich peanut butter.



5. Dried fruit and nuts

Eat in moderation, as nuts are high in (good) fats, but in small portions they're the perfect runner's snack throughout the day. Pick unsalted, raw nuts and unsweetened dried fruit; almonds and walnuts are especially beneficial.





The runner's menu

Make the correct decisions when selecting foods while dieting

Breakfast

Scrambled egg on toast

Scrambled egg whites on wholemeal bread. For an extra hit of protein and good fats, add some smoked salmon or avocado.

Cereal

Low-fat energy-boosting cereals, such as porridge, muesli or granola. Always served with skimmed milk, and add berries on top to sweeten them up and contribute towards your five-a-day.

Cereal bars

Make homemade healthy cereal bars, protein bars, or banana bread that will last you all week. Be cautious of your ingredients; use wholemeal flour and watch the sugar.

Lunch

Tuna Niçoise salad

Made from half a tin of tuna, a hard-boiled egg, green beans and salad leaves with anchovies or olives, balsamic vinegar or low-calorie salad dressing if needed.

Chicken wrap

Easy to pack for work or travel, the wrap is versatile and can be as healthy as you want it to be. Pack it with chicken breast, tuna or avocado, add veggies such as spinach or rocket, and use pesto or hummus for extra flavour.

Homemade leek and potato soup

Mix up leeks, potato and skimmed milk. Cook up a batch that can be frozen, then heat up and keep in a flask ready for lunchtime. Add a piece of wholemeal bread to make it more filling.

Dinner

Chicken and quinoa hotpot

Quinoa is an incredible source of protein. There are many varied recipes online, but try cooking it in vegetable stock and adding chicken, courgette, and sundried tomatoes for a delicious hotpot.

Roasted salmon

Wrap a piece of salmon in tinfoil and bake in the oven for 30 minutes with sliced new potatoes and vegetables. All cooked in one tin with a little olive oil, this is a healthy, quick roast dinner.

Sweet potato jackets

Tasty and filling, plus quick and very easy to prepare. Serve with vegetables, salad, meat or try adding a variety of fillings such as low-fat cottage cheese or low-fat soured cream.

Dessert

Yogurt and fruit

Low-fat flavoured yogurt with mixed fruit. Add a little honey, flaked almonds or home-made granola for a tastier topping treat.

Dark chocolate

A few squares of dark chocolate after your dinner is a small source of calcium, but as it's rich, you'll need less to satisfy you.

Banana icecream

Surprisingly, you achieve the texture of icecream simply by freezing chopped up bananas for a few hours and tossing them in a blender. Add in two teaspoons of low-fat Greek yoghurt and a splash of milk for a creamier version.



Bake your own cereal bars to control what goes into them



Homemade soup can be made in large batches and frozen



Sweet potato with low-fat sour cream, Cajun grilled chicken and salad

The importance of carbohydrates

As you increase your distance, dietary changes will need to be made to succeed

When reading about foods that are suitable for runners, you will see a lot about 'carb loading' to increase energy.

Carbohydrates provide the glucose that your body needs for energy, and runners will often increase the level of carb-heavy foods in their diet to improve their overall running performance. As a beginner to running, carbohydrates will only play a minimal role to your running and training. You don't need to carb-load, because you will not be expelling excessive amounts of energy. It is, however, important to understand the benefits of eating the right carbs at the best times to avoid weight gain, and ensure you're storing enough energy to get the most from each run and prevent you from feeling sluggish.

Carbs come in good and bad varieties, as do all foods, so picking the right ones is key. Avoid white breads, rice and pasta, instead opting for brown, wholewheat/wholegrain options where possible. Limit the amount of fresh fruit eaten too; while it is good for carbohydrate intake, it can be high in sugars, which can hurt your stomach when eaten in excess; you definitely don't want to experience what is commonly known as 'runner's trots'.

You won't need to properly carb-load until you're running for longer than 60-90 minutes in one go, but you should be always try to be aware and eat a balanced carb-based meal the night before a longer, more intensive run to ensure you perform at your best.

It's worth remembering that carbs are not the only source of energy for running. Your body can convert good fats into energy as well, so don't feel like you have to have an appreciation for pasta to be able to run longer distances! Also, try the more 'forgotten' sources of carbs, such as apples, berries, yoghurt and lentils – it's not all potatoes and pastas.

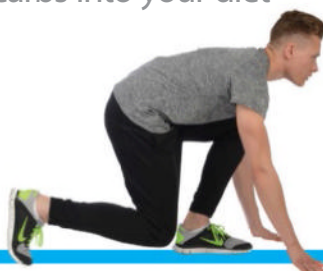
What to eat for distance

Learn whether you need to start incorporating carbs into your diet

Start line

Starting off

Only incorporate a higher amount of carbs into your diet if you are not on a strict weight-loss plan.



Walk/run

As a beginner, just try to eat a healthy breakfast, such as cereal with skimmed milk or wholegrain toast with peanut butter or jam. You won't need anything more in your diet for now.

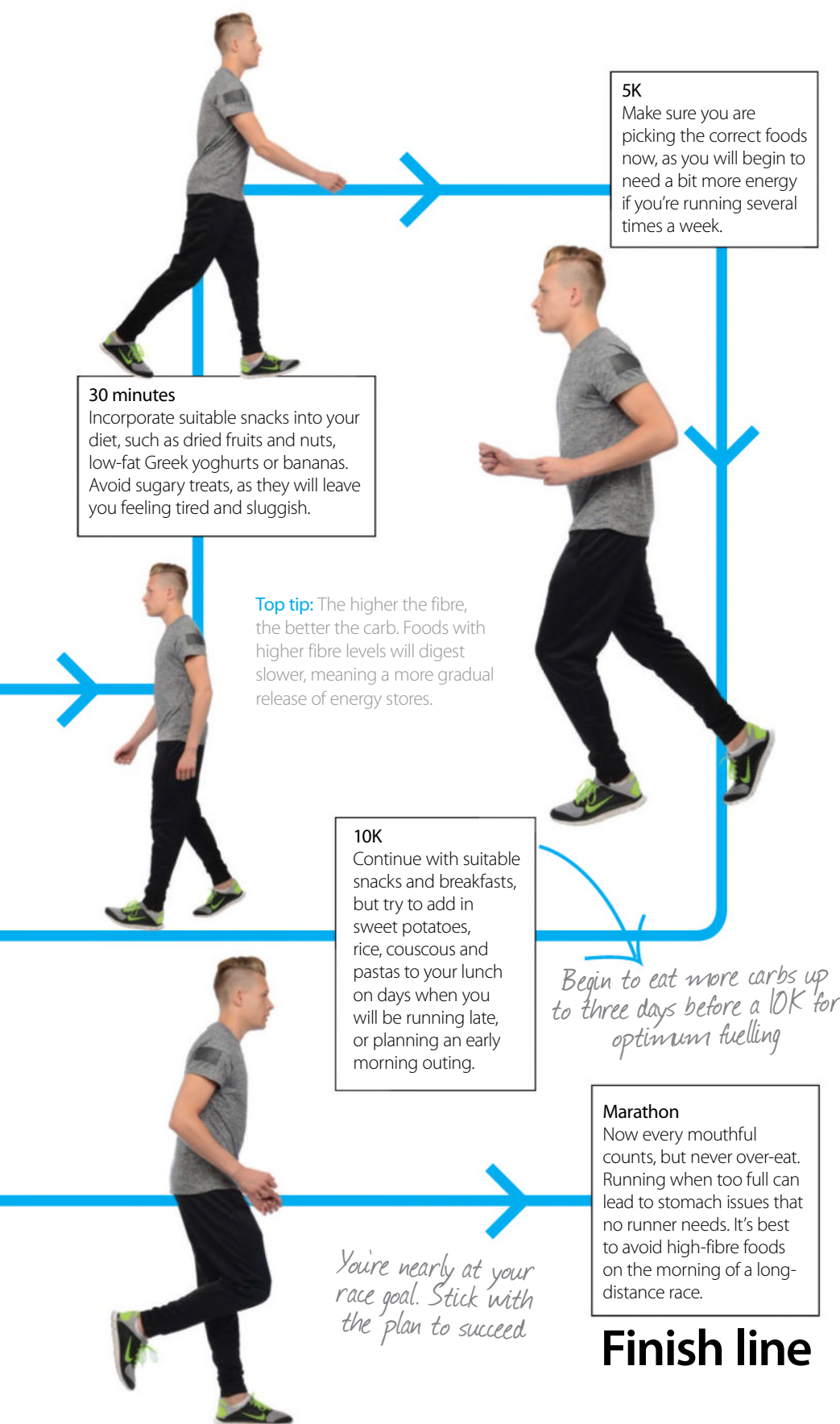
Top tip: Make sure you mix protein into your diet to help repair any muscle damage. Also remember to keep your fluid levels topped up at all times. Muscles will become stronger and greatly decrease the chance of injury.

Half marathon

Planning your meals is now a substantial part of your week. The night before long runs ensure your dinners are suitable and eat porridge an hour or more before your mid-length runs. On the morning of a longer run, try a homemade blueberry muffin – light, but filled with enough goodness to keep you energised.



Start eating extra carbs for a couple of weeks prior to a big race event



Top 5 carb essentials

1. Breakfast

Porridge is the runner's choice, but you could try homemade granola or wholemeal toast. Add a sliced banana in for extra energy.



2. Evening meal

Grilled chicken or baked fish mixed with vegetables, such as broccoli and green beans, with brown rice, quinoa, wholemeal pasta, or sweet potato.

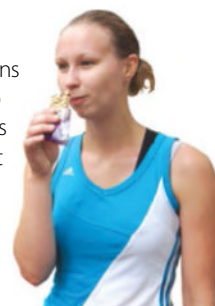


3. Pasta

Great for lunch or dinner, always pick wholewheat, brown pastas. Pasta isn't ideal for weight loss, but stick to tomato-based sauces to avoid excess calories. Pick your additions wisely; bulk up your pasta dish with veggies and skip on extra cheese or bacon.

4. Energy bars and drinks

Shop-bought options are high in sugar, so make your own bars with oats, dried fruit and honey. A DIY sports drink can be made from fruit juice, water and a pinch of salt.



5. Snacking

Keep some suitable snacks in your cupboards or desk drawers, such as dried fruit and nuts or rice cakes. Improve the rice cakes by adding peanut butter or some jam for a small sugar boost.



Sports nutrition

There is an overwhelming array of food and drink products aimed at runners, so which ones are worth your money?

When you are first starting out in running, it can be easy to get caught up in the massive range of products designed to help you run faster, recover better or lose weight.

Traditional sports products include drinks and gels, and this is what you will most often see at races (at half marathon and above they are usually provided on the route). We mentioned on the previous page that you should avoid sports drinks unless you are planning on running for over an hour. This is because at this stage they offer little benefit over water when it comes to hydration, and as long as you eat properly during the day, before and after your workout, then you shouldn't need fuel. They can undo some of your hard work when it comes to running, especially if you are trying to lose weight, as you are taking on board additional calories. If you find it hard to drink enough water, then you can consider some sports drinks that are designed simply to hydrate, not to fuel. These are tastier than water and have few calories, such as Lucozade Lite (www.lucozadesport.com/products/sport-lite/) or High5 Zero (<http://highfive.co.uk/product/hydrate/zero>). If you want to try a more natural alternative, then consider coconut water, which is naturally hydrating though the taste isn't to everyone's liking.

If you are going to be running for more than an hour, or if you are combining multiple activities (triathlon, running to and from the gym, commuting to work by foot, etc), then you can get sports drinks that offer a higher level of carbohydrates and so act as fuel. Gels are similar to these in that they provide carbs, but they do so in one go, by means of a shot of thick gel. You have to experiment with brands, as some have different consistencies, some include caffeine (which can give you 'runner's tummy') and some have to be taken with water. Read the instructions, as they will need to be taken at different intervals.

Protein is another important consideration for runners. While it is best to get this naturally

through your diet, you can get protein-based sports products. The most popular of these for runners is a recovery shake, which has the right blend of carbs and protein to aid recovery and start your muscles on the path to repair. If you feel you're not getting sufficient protein, for instance if you're a vegetarian or vegan, this is an easy way of inserting protein into your diet and aiding your recovery. Again, these are adding in calories, so use them after particularly hard efforts, such as races, rather than every run. Try For Goodness Shakes Sports Recovery (www.forgoodnessshakes.com/recovery) for example. Protein-based products, such as protein shakes and bars are often used by those who do strength training and body building, so there are plenty of options out there. If you feel like you need the extra hit, then try a protein powder (whey), which you can add into a smoothie to drink post-run to promote muscle repair. If you are mixing running with strength training and want to maintain bulk, then look for a higher protein content. If you are trying to lose weight, however, then be careful how much additional product you take on board, though there are specific protein products on the market geared towards weightloss as well as muscle building.

There has been a move towards more natural sports nutrition recently, as people look for 'cleaner' sources of fuel and protein when running. If you don't like the idea of taking sports drinks or gels, which are processed and often synthetic, then you never have to. Many runners rely on things like jelly babies, raw food bars (Nakd bars are particularly popular – www.naturalbalancefoods.co.uk), nuts and dried food as on-the-run fuel sources. You can make your own sports drink by combining water with fruit juice and adding a pinch of salt.

Chia seeds are popular for adding protein into a runner's diet and you can get runner's food from www.chiacharge.co.uk, which make flapjacks and sports drinks using the wonder seed. You can even get chia sports gels from www.33shake.com.

Top Five Sports Products

1. Better hydration

Low-calorie sports drinks that offer electrolytes can help you replace the fluid and salt lost when you sweat, just look at nutritional information.



2. Energy gels

For longer runs, gels are easy to carry to provide quick-release carbs for fuel without sitting in your stomach.



3. Jelly beans

Sports Beans or plain jelly beans can give a quick energy hit on shorter runs when needed. And not to mention, they are tasty too!



4. Recovery shake

With the right blend of protein and carbs, this helps you to recover and repair muscles. Mix your own or buy ready-to-drink, bottled shakes.



5. Real food

Try raw food or chia based foods on the run if you don't like processed sports products.



Top tip Read the labels

Sports products can contain all manner of ingredients, including sugar, sweeteners, preservatives, artificial flavourings – know what you are taking in before believing the claims on the packet. Just because it's aimed at runners, doesn't mean it's good for you. Some are little more than sweets or chocolate bars.

What to eat when

Use the right products at the right time to get the maximum benefits to your running

Day to day

Coconut water

Use as an alternative to water for some drinks on exercise days. It's naturally hydrating and replenishes electrolytes. It's also high in both potassium and magnesium, which are key nutrients.

Fish oil supplement

If you don't eat enough healthy fats – such as avocado, fish, nuts, olive oil – then consider a supplement as they can help your system function more effectively.

Protein snacks

You can get high-protein sports food for everyday, including popcorn, bars, drinks and more. If you are looking to build muscle, then these can be of benefit, but still consider them as treats.

Pre-workout

Protein flapjack

This gives you a good balance of protein and carbs, to help fuel your run, and is perfect if you don't have time for a proper meal. Try brands like Trek or Chia Charge, which are popular with runners.

Banana

One of the best sports foods and completely natural too! It has digestible carbohydrate for quick energy release, and potassium to maintain nerve and muscle function.

Porridge

If you're a morning runner, have oats made with milk, giving you both carbs and protein. Add milled seeds, dried fruit, Greek yoghurt, or even a scoop of protein powder for added boost.

During workout

Nuts and seeds

Make your own trail mix to take with you, as the fatty nuts provide energy to keep you fuelled without having to eat too much. On top of the good fatty acids, nuts contain a lot of fibre.

Sweets

Longer runs are the one time you can justify sweets! Runners swear by jelly beans or jelly babies, and they are often given out at races. A quick energy hit without filling up too much.

Gels

If you're going to use sports gels, read the packet. Some suggest taking on at the start and then every 30 minutes, but timings vary. And carry water if they require it.

Recovery

Chocolate milk

If it's good enough for Mo Farah (apparently)... It contains a 3:1 ratio of carbohydrates to protein, perfect for recovery and cost less than sports products. Dairy-free versions are also available.

Protein shake

Powdered whey protein can be mixed with milk (any kind) or water and helps to promote muscle growth and repair, great for gaining bulk and preventing injury.

Yoghurt, granola and berries

A natural recovery option that contains both protein, from the yoghurt, and carbs, from the granola to replenish and restore. Add berries for an extra dash of vitamins.



Add powdered protein to smoothies for an extra kick



Perfect workout fuel for runners



A natural recovery formula for after your workout

Beat the bulge

The most common reason people run is to lose weight. We show you the best ways to achieve this safely and how to get lasting results

Out of all cardio workouts, running is one of the most beneficial if you're aiming to lose weight.

The first step is to take a good look at your diet. To lose weight, you ideally need to burn more calories than you have put away during a day. The recommended daily calorie count for women is 2,000 and 2,500 for a male. This is what you will see on food packaging, however it's not that simple. Everyone has a personal 'Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)', which is the amount of calories your body needs to function day to day if you do absolutely nothing. Your BMR decreases as you age, so if you change nothing about your diet or exercise routine, you will naturally gain weight as you

get older. Your BMR can help you work out your daily calorie needs. This is usually your BMR plus your general activity levels – a person who stands all day or has an active job will need more calories than someone in an office. This website calculates your BMR and your Daily Calorie Needs using your height, weight, age and activity levels: www.bmi-calculator.net/bmr-calculator/.

This is your starting point, and you shouldn't eat less than your daily calorie need or you may find your body holding on to weight to prevent starvation. A pound of weight is roughly equivalent to 3,500 calories, which equates to 500 calories a day if you want to lose this amount in a week. This means eating 500

calories less, burning 500 calories more, or a combination of both. Never aim to lose more than a pound or two a week.

The most important thing is not to 'eat' all the calories that you burn from running. If you run for three miles, burn around 300 calories and treat yourself to a Mars bar, then you are not going to lose weight!

Monitoring your food intake and calorie consumption can help you lose weight too. A website like MyFitnessPal (www.myfitnesspal.com) enables you to clock your food daily and add in whatever exercise you do to meet a daily calorie target. The targets that are set by the site can be too low, but you can edit them to match your personal daily calorie needs.

Make better treat decisions

Think carefully what you are putting into your body to ensure your diet goes to plan and that you're motivated to keep going. Allow yourself some treats in the week, but eat 'naughty' foods only in moderation.

175ml white wine = 130kcal

Substitute for a glass of red wine at slightly lower 120kcal or a single vodka, soda and lime at 79kcal.



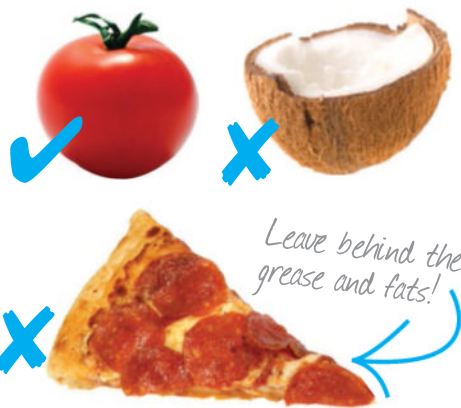
1 bar milk chocolate = 255kcal

Go for dark chocolate. At 210kcal and less fat per 49g bar, the chances are you will eat less too, as it's richer.



Takeaway curry = average 1,300Kcal

Pick one that is tomato based, avoiding coconut or creamy varieties, and choose poppadoms and plain rice over naan breads and fried rice.



Takeaway pizza = between 220-350kcal per slice

Choose a healthier, thinner-based pizza with limited cheese and vegetables, or pick a shop-bought one for more control.

Fast food burger = 492kcal

If you must eat fast food, opt for a chicken option at a more respectable 376kcal on average.



250ml can of cola = 142kcal

The diet option saves on calories, but beware, as the sweet taste and absence of sugar will increase your sugar cravings.

What's that? Food diary: Make sure you keep a log of absolutely everything you eat and drink. You might not even think about what calories are in drinks, for



Top tip

Measure up

Measuring is a better gauge of progress over weighing yourself. You might find that the scales move very little, but you are losing inches and clothes sizes as you build lean muscle and drop fat. Do this once a month to see results.

© Courtesy of Fitness First

example, so for weight-loss, stick to low-calorie drinks and limit your alcohol intake.

Eat for weightloss

Running will help you to lose weight, but what you eat is just as important, so make sure you are making the best nutritional decisions

Simple swaps, like those on the last page, will help you make healthier eating choices and will build up to help you lose weight, alongside your running regime.

However, it is your overall daily diet that will have the biggest influence on whether or not you start to shed fat. There are various weightloss diets out there that you can try and some are better than others, but many work on cutting calories, eliminating food types or using meal replacements.

These might work well in the short term, but they are not always sustainable in the long-term. If you are running, then you need to ensure that you are eating enough and getting

the right kinds of fuel to keep you going and your energy levels high.

Rather than thinking of a 'diet', you want to think of a lifetime healthy eating plan. Try cutting out, or at least down on, processed foods, refined sugars, artificial sweeteners and alcohol. Instead, fill up on 'cleaner' foods, which are those that have none or few ingredients. The bulk of your diet should come from fruit, vegetables, lean meats, fish pulses, wholegrains and a little dairy. Where possible, try and avoid 'low fat' or 'diet' products. Where they are low in fat, they are often stuffed with extra sugar so that they still taste good.

And speaking of fat, don't be afraid of it. Not all fats are made equal, and we need healthy

fats in our diet to help lubricate our joints. Think of things like virgin olive oil, coconut oil, nuts and avocado.

Get used to reading ingredient labels on your food as a habit, and choose foods that have a short list of ingredients that you recognise. If you can't pronounce something, you probably don't want to eat it. You'll soon realise how much sugar is added to your food – it's in everything from ham and bread, to table sauces and dairy-free milk. Avoid unnecessary sugars as much as you can, and stick to natural sources.

Following these basic guidelines and sticking to your Daily Calorie Needs (see pages 48-49), will enhance your running and your weightloss goals, as well as your general health.

Increase your metabolism

Many foods are claimed to speed up your metabolism, though studies are not conclusive, so don't rely on them as a one-track solution. However, there is certainly no harm in adding any of these foods to your diet. We take a look at seven 'superfoods' that are purported to aid metabolism.

Chilli

Adding a bit of heat to your dinners can reportedly help to speed up your metabolism and burn fat. Add a dose to chilli, curry, pasta dishes and more.



Green tea

Small amounts of caffeine, a stimulant making you burn calories faster, as well as catechins which are reported to be good for weightloss.



Fish

Lean protein at mealtimes can help you to boost your metabolism, as it takes more energy to process protein, than it does carbs.



Cinnamon

This tasty spice apparently helps to lower blood sugar levels and help fat cells process sugar more efficiently. Add it to your morning porridge for an extra boost.

Coffee

Caffeine jumpstarts your system and helps with fat burning, so you don't need to cut it out completely. However limit it in the afternoon so it doesn't effect your sleep.



Egg whites

Like fish, and lean meats, egg whites are full of protein. They are also said to have certain amino acids that fire your metabolism.

What's that? Food diary: Make sure you keep a log of absolutely everything you eat and drink. You might not even think about what calories are in drinks, for



Top tip

Minimal juice

Juice has been vilified in the press and it is losing its once-healthy reputation. Much of the goodness of fruit is lost (the fibre from the skin) and what is left contains a lot of fruit sugar (or even added sugar). The odd glass is fine, but stick to water as a main drink.

example, so for weight-loss, stick to low-calorie drinks and limit your alcohol intake.

Different surfaces and their fitness benefits

Explore different types of running terrain, and their pros and cons

Running is the only sport that can be done anywhere, on any surface. The key is finding a route and a terrain you are happy running on, and provides you with the best workout possible.

For those new to running, you may find tarmac too much of a shock to your body. It has no give to it, and the relentless beating down with your feet can lead to injury that no amount of shoe cushioning can compensate for.

Running on softer ground is kinder to your joints, but is harder work, requiring greater effort, which your body may not be able to give straight away. The solution is to try out a variety and see what suits you best, and what is accessible to you so that you can realistically fit it into your schedule.

The other benefit to running on different surfaces is that some are more effective than others when it comes to burning calories. The tougher the terrain, the more your muscles and body work, resulting in a greater calorie burn.

Read our guide to the different surfaces available to you as a runner, and see which ones suit you and your circumstances. Even better, go and try them out for yourself!



Treadmill

Perfect for those winter months and when you're first starting out. You can vary the pace and incline, so this is the beginner's dream piece of equipment.

Pros:

- See the calories on the screen as you burn them off
- Suitable all year round
- Vary the pace and incline to suit
- Joining a gym can help with motivation if you're paying for it
- Smooth, well-maintained surface

Cons:

- Expensive to buy one for home
- You will need to join a gym, so not always cost-effective
- Not as tantalising on the eyes as an outdoor run
- Hot, and it can be harder than outside with a breeze

Trail

Great for a mixed run filled with a variety of ground such as gravel, wood chippings and sand. Many trails found in woodlands have marked out routes so you can run in a safe environment.

Pros:

- Limited impact on the body
- Fairly even ground if you stick to the path, so reducing chance of injury
- Great locations are perfect for kids to ride bikes along with you or for dog walks
- A good calorie burn and the time flies by

Cons:

- Watch out after rain, as leaves and ground can become slippery
- If you go off-route, watch out for tree roots and other hazards
- Stick to the marked trail, or you could end up miles from your finishing point



“Running is the only sport that can be done anywhere, on any surface”

Best for older runners



Concrete

The most easily available of running surfaces, but it does put the most strain on the body. Buying well-supported trainers can help a with shock absorption.

Pros:

- Right on your doorstep
- Most routes are well-lit at night
- You can pick a route according to its specific length
- Easy to work into your schedule, via the school run or commute home
- Fairly flat and well maintained

Cons:

- High chance of injury with kerbs, dodging other people and traffic
- High-stress impact on your joints, muscles and bones, especially for beginners
- Uneven ground and some types can be very slippery when wet

Tracks

Distances are clearly marked, so tracks are perfect if working on a specific distance plan. It is also good all-weather material, as it is made from synthetic materials.

Pros:

- Good for measuring distances
- Fairly flat, even ground
- Better for speed work
- Well maintained, so limited risk of injury

Cons:

- Not suitable for long-distance running
- Hard to get an opportunity to run on one unless part of a running club
- You may need to pay to run

Best for speed work

Grass

A good natural running surface when it is kept short and flat, but watch out for any hidden holes that could sprain an ankle. Well-kept grass, such as a golf course or football field, will be in top condition, but be careful on longer grassland, as this can hide hazards.

Pros:

- Softer on your joints, and good for older runners or those with an injury
- Harder workout on your muscles, helping to tone up quicker
- Open space gives you a sense of freedom without clock watching

Cons:

- Uneven ground can cause havoc on your ankles and feet, ending up in injury
- Not the best surface after heavy rain, as it can become slippery or boggy
- Hard to find flat open land you can run on that is well lit, so be careful

Sand

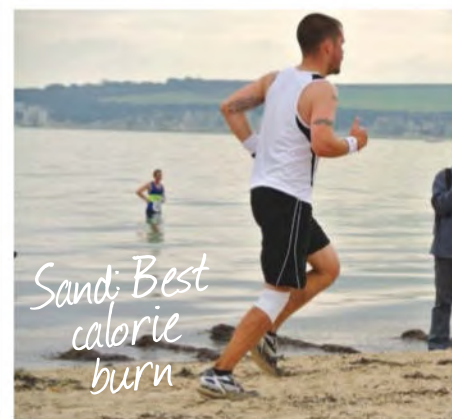
A hard workout, but soft on your joints – perfect for runners who want to work a bit harder or recovering from an injury. Choose from deep soft sand for a calf workout, or wet flatter sand found along the water's edge.

Pros:

- Try barefoot running – a good feeling, but beware of sharp items hidden in the sand
- Great for strengthening muscles
- A good calorie burn
- Great scenery

Cons:

- Busy location, so time your runs well
- The soft sand can lead to ankle/Achilles injuries
- The wetter sand is usually more angled, so run in both directions for an even workout
- Uneven surface, so higher chance of injury



Running for women

20 things you really need to know if you're a female runner

While the basic principles of running remain the same, there are differences between men and women when it comes to running. From safety concerns to differences in body makeup, let's start with some top tips for female eyes only!

1: Clear your mind

Women are increasingly under a lot of stress to both hold down a full-time job and bring up a family. Running is a stress reliever and even better when with friends. Running in a group gives you all the chance to vent and chat while the time passes by quickly.

2: Safety aware

Never run in dark isolated areas; always pick well-lit areas in the evenings, or run in a group. Don't use headphones when running in an isolated area, so that you're fully aware of your surroundings and who is around you.

3: Weight loss

Weight loss tends to be a bigger concern for women, but luckily you have picked the best sport for great results. Regardless of whether you run fast or slow, the benefits you will reap are far greater than with any other activity.

4: Muscle power

Women don't naturally bulk up like men do when undertaking regular weight training. You will tone up and improve the shape of your body, strengthening as you run without turning into a female bodybuilder!



5: Women-only races

Many new runners want to enter a race as a challenge and do something great for charity. The Race for Life events are perfect for this, as they are a women-only event where you will see women of all shapes, ages and sizes running with family members and friends for an excellent cause. The races cover 5K and 10K, and are held all over the country; visit www.raceforlife.org for more information.

6: Health benefits

Running can help ward off many cases of ill health in females. Running lowers the chance of heart disease, and reduces blood pressure and the risk of diabetes. There is also evidence to prove it can help prevent cancerous cells developing – one of many excellent reasons why you should start running today!

7: Vitamins and minerals

Glucosamine is essential for joint protection, but as a female you will need to ensure your calcium and iron levels are also topped up. Calcium helps ensure your bones are as healthy and strong as can be, and iron is beneficial to menstruating women.

8: Relieve PMT

Running is probably the last thing you want to do with painful stomach cramps, but it can work wonders as a pain-relieving tool. Feel-good endorphins are released, making you feel as good as new – well, until you stop at least!

9: Period aware

If your period becomes too light or stops altogether, then you are overdoing it, which is dangerous to the state of your bones and body. See a doctor straight away if you notice a change.

10: Planning a pregnancy

If you are trying to conceive, then lay off excessive running and training. Overtraining and too little body fat can make you miss a period, meaning you probably aren't ovulating.



If unsure if you should run, then cross-train instead

11: Don't overheat

If your body is currently used to exercise, then continuing with moderate exercise when pregnant is fine. Just ensure you don't overdo it and keep your body temperature regulated. Perhaps try switching to low impact sports for a while if you find yourself beginning to struggle.

12: Pregnancy

During pregnancy, your breathing will change, meaning you'll find yourself short of breath quicker when running. It isn't your body getting less fit; it is natural, so just listen to what it is telling you, take it easy and never ignore fatigue. Invest in some comfier clothing that is made from stretchy material and make sure you slow your pace, never over do it.

13: Early pregnancy

You may not feel up to running in the first few weeks of pregnancy as your body is changing, which you will notice. You may feel nauseous and exhausted, but running can relieve some of these unavoidable side effects. Slow the pace, and alternate your running and rest days. Only run, though, if you have been doing it for a few months before becoming pregnant, never start running when pregnant as it will put too much stress onto your body.

14: Post pregnancy

Take it easy after pregnancy, as your body will be more prone to injury. Your body has



Have fun when exercising with friends



Share your worries to help you relax



Get a buggy suitable for running



If pregnant, take it easy and stay cool, slow your pace and enjoy running while it is still comfortable, never overdo it

gone through a lot, so give it time to rest and strengthen again. Don't start exercising again until you get the okay from your doctor and it is pain-free to do.

15: Clearer skin

Running outdoors can have a skin-boosting benefit, as circulation is increased, improving the balance of the skin. The fresh air will also give you a healthy glow compared to the sticky, air-conditioned feeling you get from a gym. Any exercise will help clear your skin though.

16: Good kit

Wear correct-fitting clothing that's not too tight to avoid any feminine hygiene issues. Avoid using fabric conditioners on your running

clothes, which could irritate sensitive skin areas. Wearing clothes that are made from breathable materials will also leave you feeling cooler and far more comfortable

17: Sports bras

The most important piece of running kit that a woman can buy. Pick a well-fitting one that feels tight and secure. Always try before you buy, and yes, this does mean jogging on the spot in the changing room! If pregnant then just invest in one a size bigger for comfort.

18: Take your kids

If you're a mum, invest in a buggy suitable for running so that you can take your child with you. Get your dog, boyfriend/husband, sister,

neighbour, whoever, to join; taking the whole gang with you for a breath of fresh air will eradicate that "I have no time" excuse.

19: Hecklers

Everyone will run past someone who thinks that they are funny by shouting out an insult or whistling as you pass. It is tempting to retaliate, but just ignore them; you don't want to anger the wrong person when running on your own.

20: Leave a note

Always tell someone where you are running and how long you will be gone for. Try to carry your mobile phone with you in a sports belt or pocket, so you can contact someone if needed.

Running for men

Male runners have their own running issues to deal with; we look at some of them here

Male runners have just as much to contend with as female runners, and some very gender-specific problems and concerns. These tips should help you address the most common queries and issues, so you can get on with the simple act of running.

1: Limit competitiveness

Men can be competitive, with themselves and in peer groups. We've probably all met that person who claims that they could just turn up and run a half marathon without training. Gaining running strength means consistency, and a slow, steady build up. It's the best way to get stronger and stay uninjured. Focus on yourself and your training, and you will be reaping the rewards soon enough.

2: Unintended weight loss

When you start running, you might find that you begin to lose weight and that isn't always desirable. If you find that the scales are on a downward spiral, then you need to review your nutrition plan, and look at cross-training to maintain muscles that running doesn't use. Weight training can be useful for keeping bulk.



Staying hydrated is even more important for men

3: Intended weight loss

Of course, losing weight might be exactly what you are trying to do, and running is a great way to do this. If you are starting running overweight, then you need to make sure that you have supportive shoes, that you start slowly and you keep an eye out for injuries – your body will be under a lot of pressure at first, but it gets easier as you start to shed fat.

4: Weight training

You don't have to give up weight training to run. In fact, it can benefit your running by building leg strength, giving you a powerful core and maintaining a strong upper body. It's better to do weight training and running on different days, or you will be doing one with a tired body, meaning you might lose good form or not be able to perform to your best.

5: Don't give up other sports

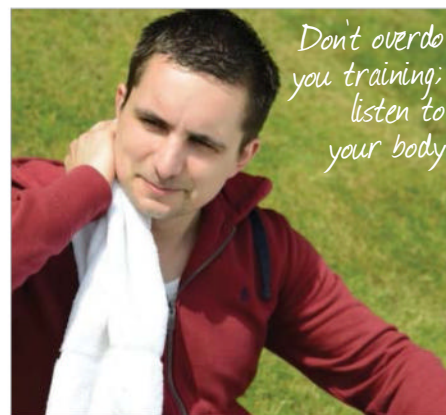
If you already do other sports, such as football or squash, build them into your running program rather than neglect them or try to do too much. These involve running anyway, usually in short, fast bursts, therefore use your running sessions to focus more on a slower pace and a longer distance to balance things out.

6: Beware of injuries

Different sports come with different injuries, but they can all affect your running. If you turn an ankle at football, or pull a muscle lifting weights, you should rest from running while you heal, until it is completely pain free to walk. At that point you can start slowly building back up to where you left off and reintroduce each activity as you regain fitness.

7: Chafing

It's not nice, but one problem that is very much a 'male' problem is sore nipples. While women have sports bras as protection, it's a different situation for men, as this sensitive area rubs against t-shirts and can cause painful chafing or even bleeding. Prepare for this by using petroleum jelly, and you can get specially



Don't overdo you training; listen to your body

designed plasters to cover the area (usually called nipple guards or something similar).

8: Go tight

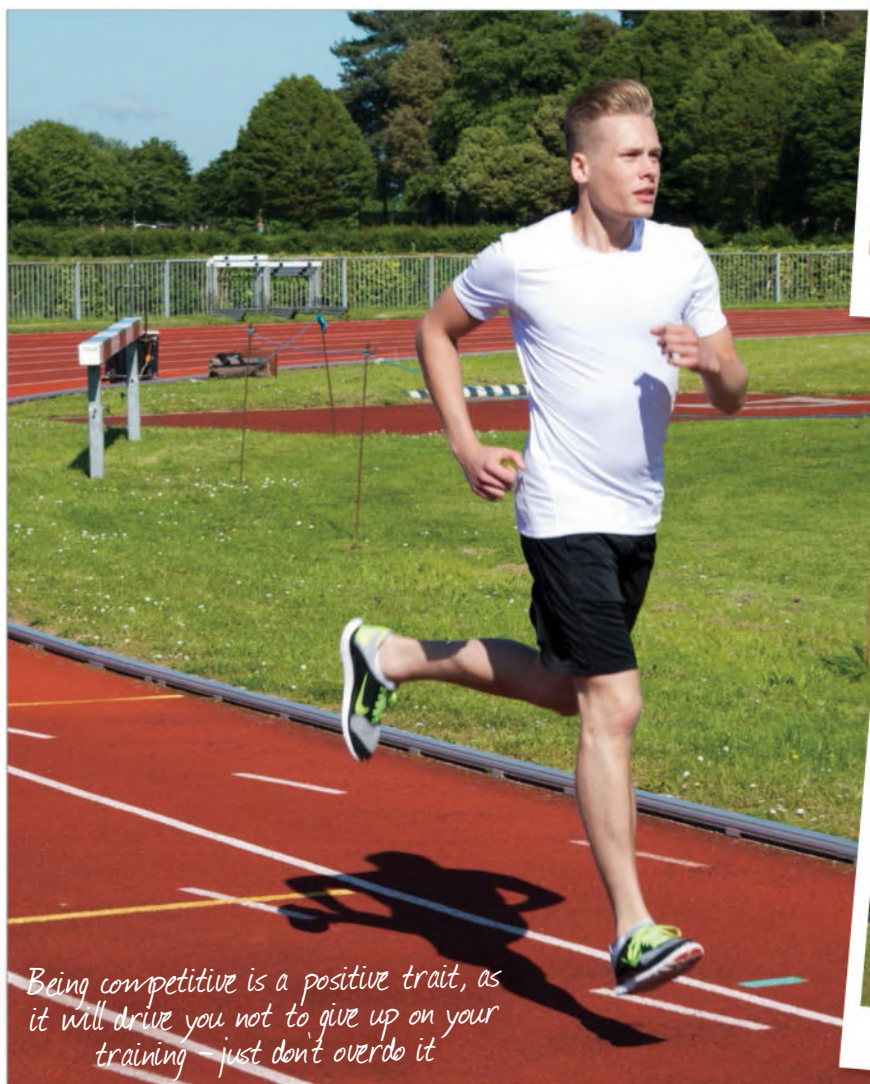
Women suffer less from chafing in sensitive areas, such as the thighs, because they are more likely to wear skintight leggings so that skin doesn't meet skin. Don't be afraid to do the same; you can get tight cycling shorts style bottoms with normal, looser-fit shorts over the top for the best of both worlds. Use petroleum jelly in any areas that rub.

9: Supportive underwear

When you're running, you want everything to be held in place. Some shorts have an inner 'pant' area so you could go 'commando', but you might not find this supportive enough. You can get away with well-fitted boxers, but cotton isn't the best choice as it doesn't wick sweat away. Proper sports underwear is both supportive and stays dry.

10: Stay hydrated

It's easy to forget to drink enough water when running, especially if you're not one of those people who downs their eight glasses a day as standard. Men need more water than women in general, so keep an eye on your urine to ensure you are getting enough (a pale straw colour is perfect) and keep drinking throughout the day. Keep a bottle of water with you as a habit.



Being competitive is a positive trait, as it will drive you not to give up on your training – just don't overdo it



Don't ignore injuries or pains



Take care of your feet as well as shoes



Stretching will help you avoid injury

11: Don't be stubborn

Are you the type to ignore aches, pains and niggles? Do you shrug them off and carry on as normal? This is just asking for long-term problems. That tiny niggle in your ankle could lead to serious injury and months off running. Running through a chest infection can ensure it stays with you for longer. Be honest about your symptoms and appropriate measures to rest and recover.

12: 'Weekend warrior'?

The term 'weekend warrior' refers to those who work hard in the week and try and cram everything in during the weekend. You might have **time** to fit in two runs, a game of football, a round of tennis and a hike, but you are more

likely to get injured. If you can only train at weekends, then it's better to take longer to reach your goals than do too much in one go.

13: Blood in urine

If you come back from a run and see blood in your urine, don't immediately panic. It could be hematuria, which is when red blood cells leak into urine following intense exercise and/or dehydration. See a doctor to eliminate any other causes, but you should be sure to hydrate properly and work at the right pace for your fitness level.

14: Watch your diet

If your diet isn't that great, or you pay little attention to what you eat, especially on the go,

then it's worth thinking more about nutrition to fuel your running session. Get a good balance of carbs, proteins, lean meats and fats, add in plenty of fruit and vegetables, and limit processed food and alcohol.

15: Foot hygiene

Look after your feet, as you need them! The health and hygiene of your feet is essential to runners. Infections, like athlete's foot, can thrive in moist, sweaty socks and trainers. When you finish running, take your socks and shoes off immediately rather than lounging around in them. Wash your feet and let them air dry for a little while. Dry out your trainers before you next wear them and grab a fresh pair of socks every time you run.

Training

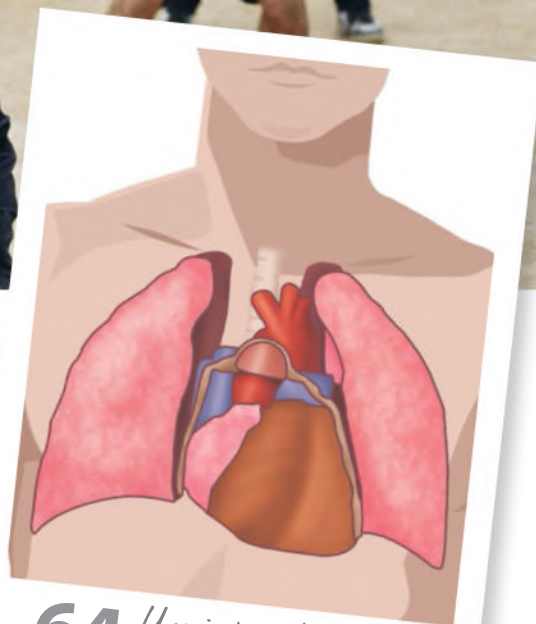
74

Learn to build your strength and stamina



Training

Exploring the different ways to train and how they can help you to reach your running goals



64 *Use interval training to increase lung capacity*

64 **Types of training**

Add variety into your running

70 **Perfect running form**

Make sure you are running right

72 **Indoors vs outdoors**

The treadmill or the road?

74 **Complementary exercise**

The best cross-training for runners

76 **Complementary classes**

From CrossFit to spinning - what to try

78 **Interval training**

Add in different-paced running

80 **Post-injury running**

Getting back to health

82 **Overtraining and the risks**

Don't fall foul of this common issue

84 **How to properly recover after a run**

The right way to rest



72 *The pros and cons of indoors and outdoors*



84

Find the right foods to help you recover quickly

65

See how you can
vary your running
with these tips



64 Stretch in preparation
for your runs



82 Make sure that you
don't overtrain



Types of training

Pick the right training sessions to meet your goals and don't be afraid to mix it up

As a new runner, you can easily go out and just run three times a week and get a lot fitter. But if your goals are to run further or faster, or to enter a race, then there are other types of training that will help you to meet these goals, as well as give your fitness and weight loss an extra boost.

Over these six pages, we will look at the many different types of training that you can fit into your routine.

Slow and steady

When you first start running, all of your runs will be of the slow and steady variety, which is great for building up your endurance and getting your body used to the motions of running. But the slow, steady run is a staple

week, but only by small amounts. Once you are running three times a week for about 30 minutes, then you can start to add in some different training routines.

As well as the steady run, there is the easy run. This is performed at a slower pace than your normal steady run; usually as a recovery from a hard session. After a speedwork or hills session, your body can be aching and in need of rest. However, a gentle run can actually help you to recover, if done correctly. It's not about time or effort; it should be slow and easy. It should also be a smaller distance than your usual steady runs.

Easy runs can also be done simply for enjoyment. They are more recreational than any of your training runs, and it pays to add them into your routine from time to time.

distance without having to slow down or walk towards the end of the session.

When you first start out, you may be following a run/walk program. You will still have a long run each week, but the goal is to complete a set distance or time, running as much of it as you can, but taking regular walk breaks. Each week, your aim is to reduce the walk breaks until you can complete the whole of the time or distance without walking. Then, you can start to increase the time/distance slowly week on week.

When training for a race, from 5K up to a half-marathon, your long run will aim to build up to completing the full race distance in training a couple of weeks before the event. This will help your confidence, and you'll know that you can finish the race, giving you a couple of weeks to

“The key element of a training routine is slowly building up distance to meet your goal”

part of any runner's training plan, whether you're working towards your first 5K or your fifth marathon.

A steady run is performed at a comfortable pace, where you can hold a conversation and feel like you could keep going for a long time without tiring. As a beginner, this should describe all of your runs and as you get used to running, you can start to mix it up with different types of training. One of the benefits of the steady run is that they help to teach you about pacing. It's common for runners to go off too fast and struggle as the run continues, leading to a slower finish and a more uncomfortable body. The steady run should keep the same pace throughout. During the run, concentrate on even, rhythmical breathing, analyse your running form and check for any aches and pains. By being more aware of your running style, you can ensure that you are running properly and you'll get more out of the session, as well as preventing injury. Increase the time or the distance of your steady runs each

When training towards something, it is easy to get wrapped up in times, goals and distances, which is great for motivation. But it pays to have the odd run that reminds you of the simple joys of running, such as time to yourself, enjoying being outside, running with friends. Make time for these kinds of runs and reap the benefits.

The long run

A key element of a training routine is slowly building up distance to meet your goal. This is achieved by adding in one 'long' run a week. This is your longest run of the week, and accounts for around 25 per cent of your total weekly mileage. This is usually best done at weekends, as you need to have enough time to fuel up properly and have a thorough warm up before you head out, then you will need enough time afterwards to stretch, cool down and rehydrate. It also needs to be a quality run, where you are not distracted by having to get back for something. The long run is performed at a steady pace so that you can finish the

work on race quality and pacing. Once you have completed your first race, and you are starting to look at getting a PB, then it is actually worth running your longest 'long run' at further than race distance. This will mean that on your race day, you'll know that you can go further, so you can push yourself across the race distance and finish strong and in a good time.

However, if you are looking towards a marathon in the future, then this strategy is actually reversed, and you won't complete the full race distance until the race itself. As the marathon is so hard on the body, you won't have time in a typical training session to run a full marathon in training and recover in time for the main event. Most runners training to run a marathon will only complete a run of 20 miles (up to 22 miles) three weeks before the race day.

Pacing runs

In order to complete a race in a desired time, it is important to come to terms in pacing. Your pace is the speed at which you finish a distance



Try varying the surfaces that you run on



Add pacing runs into the mix



Stretch out and get prepared for your long steady runs



Pick picturesque locations for your long runs to keep your interest up

Top tip

Go off-road

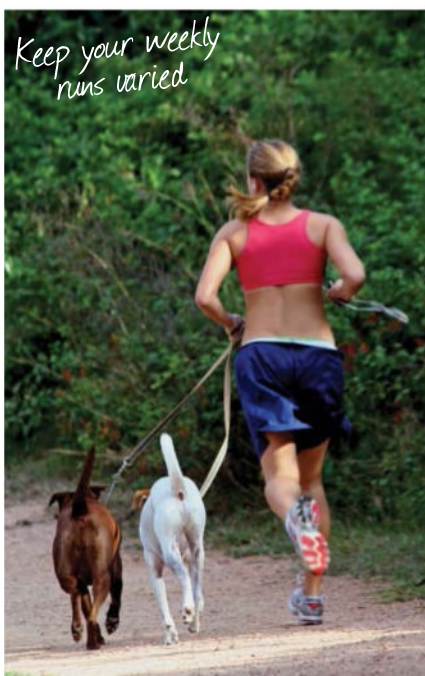
When you are working on your slow and steady runs, try to vary the surfaces that you work on so that you can keep boredom at bay. Going off-road also challenges your body more due to the uneven surface, so you will burn more calories. It is easier on your joints, too, as the ground is softer.

Putting it all together

How to incorporate training types into a weekly routine

Try this routine for a beginner's way to fit the basic training types into your week. It does involve working out five times a week, but these sessions don't have to last more than 30 minutes. Consider using your commute or dog walk to fit in your steady and easy runs, and for cross-training, you could go to a class with a friend or take the kids swimming, for example.

Day	Activity
Monday	Easy run
Tuesday	Steady run with 10 minutes of fartlek
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Steady run with hills
Friday	Cross-training
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Longer run



as an average over the entire race. Getting the right pace for the right distance will mean that you can complete the race steadily and feel strong and stable.

It is difficult at first to figure out what pace you need to run at. Before you start training for a race, you can just run at whatever pace feels comfortable to get used to it. Times only come into play when you have a time goal for a race. To get an idea of the right pace for you, time yourself over a measured mile to get your one-mile min/mile pace. You can then work out roughly what your current target pace should be for each race distance.

Bear in mind that the longer the distance, the slower your race pace will become. For example, your 10K pace is likely to be about 15 seconds a mile slower than your 5K pace. The easiest way to figure out your pace is to use an online pace calculator. There are hundreds of them around, but stick to the ones on well-known running sites like Runner's World (www.runnersworld.com) for accuracy. You simply input the time that it took for you to run that mile, and it will calculate your perfect pace for any other distance.

Take into consideration that this is your race pace and not your training pace. If you ran at race pace at all times, your body would be

pace until it starts to feel more comfortable, then you can begin running for longer periods at that speed. This is when speedwork really comes in to play, which is what we will be looking at next.

Speeding it up

Once you have passed the 'beginners' threshold, and you are regularly running about three times a week for 30 minutes or more, then you can start to introduce speedwork into your training routine. As you can probably guess from the name, this type of training will help to improve your speed.

If you are training for a race, then this is essential for many reasons. First, running at speed puts your body under extra pressure, as you need to pull on your fuel reserves and get more oxygen pumping into your muscles. For this reason, speedwork is not easy, but the benefits are that your body will get used to using its fuel reserves effectively, and your lung capacity will increase, as will your body's ability to function on lower oxygen levels. Your normal-pace running will start to feel easy and you won't feel as tired over the same distance as you did before. It will help to improve your race pace and you will increase your endurance,

"Once you are running three times a week, introduce speedwork into your routine"

overworked and you would soon start to feel the effects. Most of your training runs will be performed below race pace, but you do need to know what it feels like, so you will need to add in intervals at race pace to get used to it. These intervals can then be increased in length. If you have time in your schedule, try to run a practice race at race pace or just under before the final event to ensure that your training is going to plan.

To help you cope with race pace, it also pays to add in speedwork that goes above race pace in the form of short sprints. This helps your body and circulatory system to cope with extra demands for oxygen and fuel, which will help you conserve and use energy more effectively on race day.

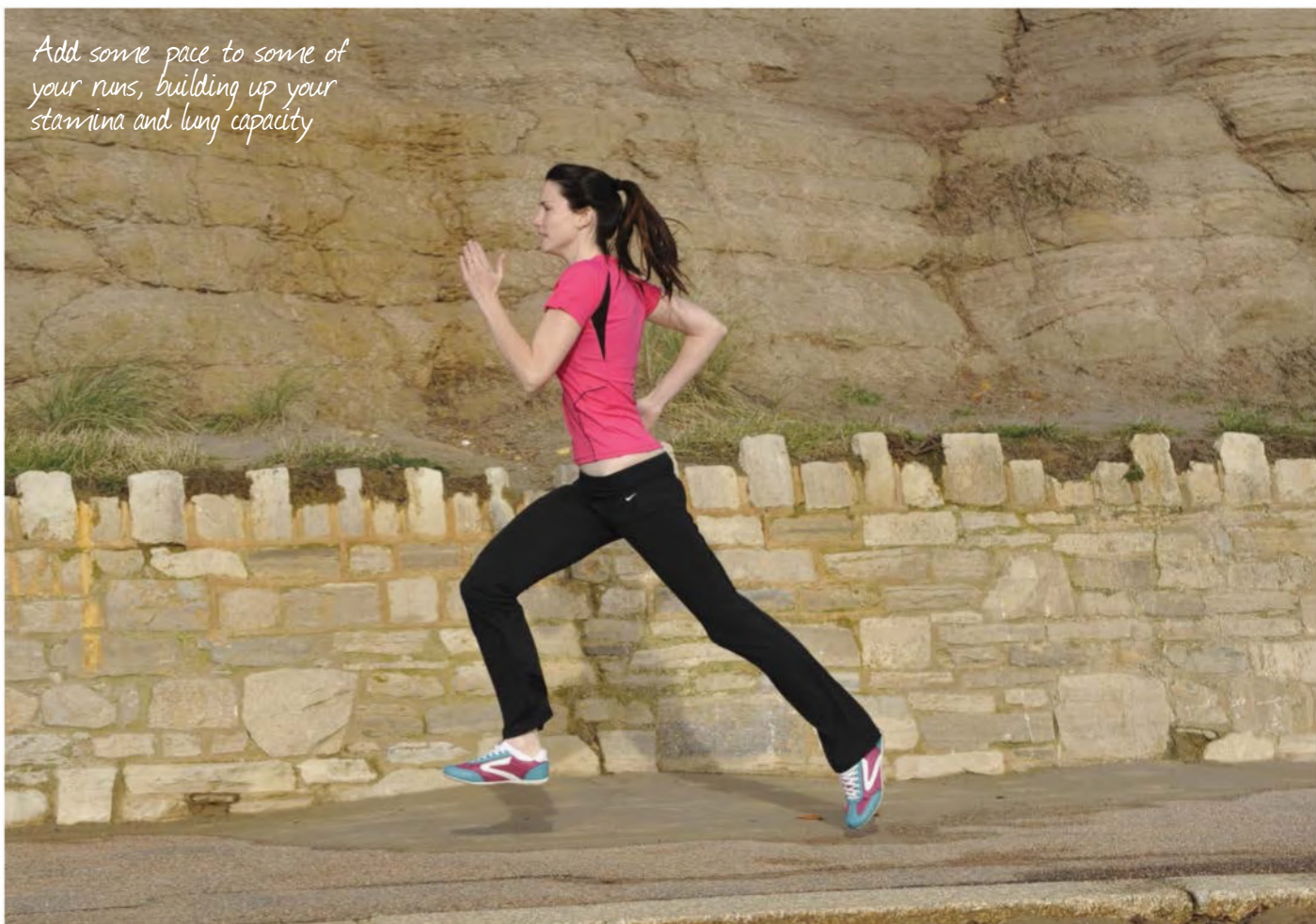
As you get more used to running, and have a race or two under your belt, then you can start to work on improving your race pace. Start by throwing in intervals at your new target race

helping you to aim for longer and longer race distances.

The joy of speedwork is that even if you are not interested in speed or racing, it has its benefits. Working at this higher intensity will burn more calories than running at a slower speed, which will benefit you once you hit a plateau and your body is used to steady-state running. It also increases your metabolism, so you will continue to burn more calories after your training session has finished.

A simple way to start to include speedwork is to try fartlek, which means speed play. This is where you add in random bursts of sprinting during a normal run. These intervals are not timed or measured – you simply pick a point to run to, sprint to it, and slow back down until you are fully recovered, then do it again. This will help you to reap the benefits of speed, but it is properly measured intervals that have the maximum effect.

Add some pace to some of your runs, building up your stamina and lung capacity



Intervals start small; usually around 200m. You sprint at a hard pace so that you can no longer hold a conversation for 200m or 30 seconds, and then you slow back down to normal pace. This recovery period should be double the time or distance of the sprint interval, but as a beginner, recover until your breathing has returned to normal before sprinting again. You should repeat this a number of times in the middle of a session to get used to periods of extreme effort and recovery, which will teach your body to recover quicker and help in all types of training. Because it pays to be accurate with intervals, a treadmill can come in handy. If you can get access to a running track, which can be found in some public parks, then you can use the measured distances here, too. If you can't get an accurate measured distance, then stick to time and use a watch instead.

Intervals don't always mean sprinting, however. It can be any time period of increased

pace. When you are training for a race, you can do intervals at race pace during a normal session. For a 5K, try running half a mile (800m) at race pace, twice during the session, recovering fully in between.

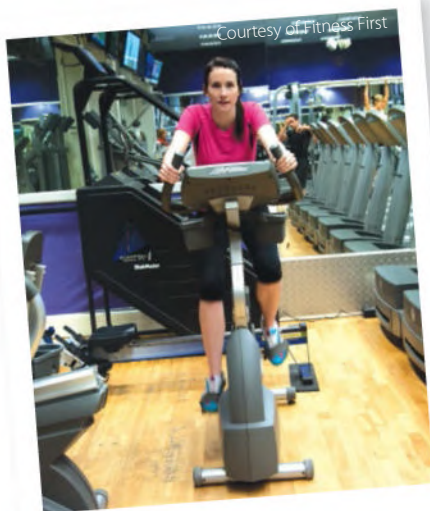
Introducing hills

Hills can strike dread into the heart of even the most seasoned runner. They are hard work, but it is definitely worth adding them into your training routine. You will rarely find a completely flat race, and you don't want to struggle on the day because you have been avoiding inclines in training. At the simplest level, hill training means just planning a route that includes hills, and running up them as much as you can, even if you have to slow right down. It pays off, too, as running hills helps to improve your leg strength, cardiovascular performance and overall fitness. It also burns more calories through the additional effort, too.



Add gentle hills to your runs

Training



Courtesy of Fitness First

Use other cardio machines



Courtesy of Fitness First

Good core balance helps runners



Courtesy of Fitness First

Try to work your upper body



Courtesy of Fitness First

Don't forget about your strength and core work

Hitting the hill correctly can make all the difference in how you feel when you get to the top. First, don't try and keep up with your normal pace, and start to shorten your stride. Don't lean into the hill or over-compensate and pull back. You need to try and maintain your normal running form. Monitor your breathing, too. If you are breathing too heavily, then you need to slow your pace and watch out for overstriding. Lower your gaze; fixating on the top of the hill isn't going to help. Instead, look at a point on the ground a few feet in front of you, which will hide the worst of the incline. When you get to the top, resist the urge to slow down or stop. Keep your slower pace, but start

to increase your stride again and keep your breathing even. This active recovery will get you back up to pace again much more quickly.

What goes up, must also come down, and one of the biggest mistakes runners make is to try and make up for lost time and sprint down the hills. This will put a lot of pressure on your joints, and you will feel muscle soreness afterwards. Instead, you can afford to lengthen your stride a little, but not too much, and slow down slightly from your usual pace. Concentrate on keeping your body upright, too, so that you maintain good running form.

With hills, practice really does make perfect. So, when you are getting ready for a race, make

sure that you dedicate one session every other week to hill training. Run at a steady pace first to get into the rhythm, then find a nice hill to work on. Sprint up the hill as fast as you can, and then walk down to recover. Repeat this three or four times, making sure that you are fully recovered in between. It's not easy, but it will give you a good strength workout, saving on a few squats in the gym, you will burn more calories, and you'll increase your pace and performance on the flat.

Cross-training

Becoming a good runner means spending time in the gym as well as on the roads. Cross-training can make a massive difference to your running training. Most importantly is strength training. By building leg strength, you are helping your body to cope with the impact of your legs hitting the concrete. This is best done through classic exercises like squats and lunges, with weights in the hand as you get used to it. If you feel self-conscious doing these exercises in the gym, then try to do them at home in front of the TV. Aim to do three sets of 12 squats or lunges, with a minute's rest in-between each set. You might also want to consider a group class that incorporates strength training, such as a boxing fitness class or Body Pump (see page 76 for more classes). These have the advantage of working the whole body, while also helping you to build leg strength with expert tuition.

Think about your core strength, too. Your core is a series of muscles that form a corset structure around your middle. These muscles help you to maintain good posture, and a weak core can lead to incorrect running form. Your core can be worked through exercises like the plank, side plank and sit-ups. Again, there are plenty of classes that you could try to help with this. Pilates is particularly good for targeting the core muscles, and yoga helps both the core and incorporates leg strengthening routines.

You can also get a cardio boost by adding in a cross-training session a week. Doing something different that gets your heart rate going, such as spinning, cycling, rowing or swimming, will take the impact off your running muscles and joints, but still give your heart rate a boost. As runners, it is easy to forget about the rest of our body, so just one session a week doing something that works your upper body (the cross-trainer or the rowing machine are good for this), will ensure that you have evenly proportioned and toned bodies.

Glossary of key training terms

Common terms you may come across

Aerobic

This is an activity that needs oxygen, forcing the heart and lungs to work harder to meet the body's needs. An aerobic workout is performed at a steady pace with controlled breathing.

Anaerobic

The opposite of aerobic, meaning 'not requiring oxygen'. When you start introducing high-intensity speedwork, your body will learn to function without oxygen, pushing you to your limits, but increasing your fitness levels.

Cross-training

Any other aerobic exercise, such as swimming, cycling or using the cross-trainer, can complement running or as an alternative when injured. It literally means to train across more than one sport; triathletes are the ultimate cross-trainers.

Easy/recovery run

A slow-paced run that is designed to help recover from a harder session the day before. As a beginner, easy runs will make up the majority of your program to begin with, as they help you get used to the motions of running.

Fartlek

From the Swedish for 'speed play', this is a kind of interval running that has no set rules. You pick any object in the distance, run hard until you get there, and slow down again to recover. You then pick a new point to run to. It's a great way to introduce speedwork into a routine.

Intervals/repeats

These are set distances of faster-paced running, followed by a recovery jog. These are accurately measured, so a treadmill can come in handy. However, you could do timed intervals instead.

Long runs

This is your longest run of the week, and the one that will best prepare you to finish a race of any distance. This should be increased by around ten per cent per week until you reach your target distance, or you can increase by time instead, depending on your goals.

Min/mile

A common pacing term, referring to the time it takes for you to run one mile as an average over the length of your run. A good beginner's pace is 10 or 11 minute per mile, but everyone is different. As you get fitter, you can aim to reduce this.

Negative split

This is when you run the second half of a race or your running route faster than the first. Try running out to a certain point and beat yourself back. This helps you get used to finishing a race strong – the famous sprint finish!

Out and back

This is a route that you run where you head out in one direction for a certain time or distance, then turn around and come back along the exact same route.

PB

Meaning 'Personal Best', this is your fastest time over a set distance. This usually refers to a time set in a race, but it could be the best time you complete a local circuit, too.

Tempo run

This is when you run at a 'comfortably hard' pace. You should find tempo running challenging, as they are designed to help build speed. You usually start with an easy jog to begin with, then move into a tempo pace, before cooling down in a jog again. Try it by jogging for ten minutes, speeding up for a bit, and then jogging again.

Perfect running form

Alter the way you run to reduce injury and improve performance

Running can be so simple: one foot in front of the other, and repeat. But there is a 'right' way to run.

On the right is the most biomechanically correct posture, reducing impact on your joints and ensuring you are projecting the maximum energy possible into each step. Getting assessed in a specialised running shop and being paired up with the right trainers for you should correct the way your feet and ankles move when running, but there is more to consider than just your feet.

An incorrect running posture can lead to injury, and you will struggle to feel relaxed and

natural when out for a run. You want running to be as easy and as enjoyable as possible to motivate you to keep going out time and again. Take a look at our annotated figure and try to keep this in mind when you are running. Ensure your shoulders are low and back slightly so you're not slouching; your back is straight and tall; your stomach muscles are tight, aiding your balance; your hands are loosely gripped to help you stay relaxed, and your arms are moving in a back and forth motion at 90 degrees to help propel you forwards.

As you run, take note of what your body is doing and how you are feeling as you progress.

If something feels uncomfortable, then see if you can shift into a more neutral position. Once you get used to running 'properly', you will start to do it unconsciously. Always revise your stance halfway through your run to ensure you're still holding a strong position.

Top tip

Core strength

Keeping your central core (stomach, lower back, glutes and hips) as strong as possible will make you a better runner. It will improve the motion of your body, your balance and ensure everything moves as biomechanically sound as can be.

Achieve a strong core

Three key strengthening moves every runner should master

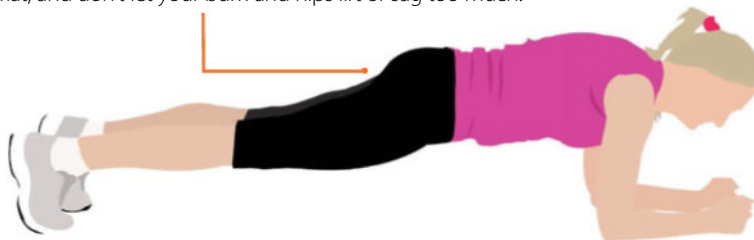
1. Bridge pose

Yoga classes generally help the core and are recommended for runners, and poses such as the Bridge strengthen the stomach, back and buttocks, which will reduce the chance of lower back pain when running.



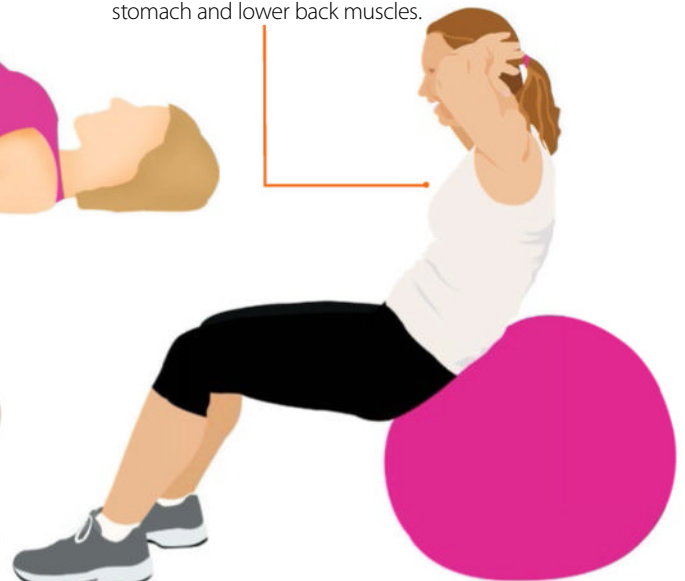
2. The plank

Hold a plank for a minute for the best results. Holding this pose right is the key to success; ensure your body is flat, and don't let your bum and hips lift or sag too much.

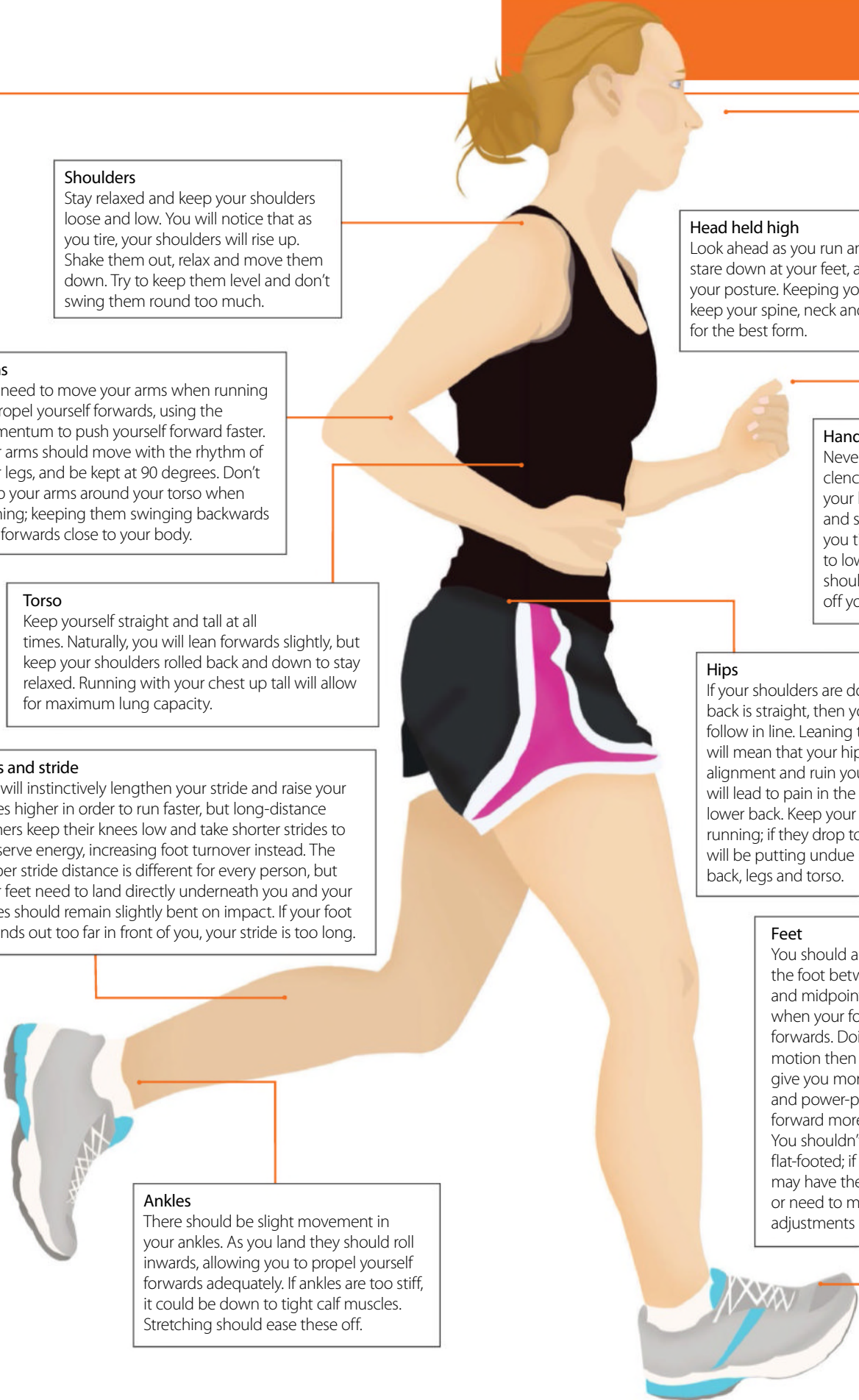


3. Crunches

Doing sit ups while sat on a ball forces you to hold your centre strong, improving balance and toning up the stomach and lower back muscles.



What's that? Biomechanics: The make-up of your body is down to the individual's 'biomechanics'. This is how you naturally move, and in some cases areas such as



Shoulders

Stay relaxed and keep your shoulders loose and low. You will notice that as you tire, your shoulders will rise up. Shake them out, relax and move them down. Try to keep them level and don't swing them round too much.

Head held high

Look ahead as you run and try not to stare down at your feet, as this will ruin your posture. Keeping your gaze high will keep your spine, neck and head aligned for the best form.

Arms

You need to move your arms when running to propel yourself forwards, using the momentum to push yourself forward faster. Your arms should move with the rhythm of your legs, and be kept at 90 degrees. Don't wrap your arms around your torso when running; keeping them swinging backwards and forwards close to your body.

Hands

Never run with clenched fists; keep your hands relaxed and structured. As you tire, remember to lower your shoulders and loosen off your grip.

Torso

Keep yourself straight and tall at all times. Naturally, you will lean forwards slightly, but keep your shoulders rolled back and down to stay relaxed. Running with your chest up tall will allow for maximum lung capacity.

Hips

If your shoulders are down and your back is straight, then your hips should follow in line. Leaning too far forward will mean that your hips will go out of alignment and ruin your form, which will lead to pain in the hips, groin and lower back. Keep your hips level when running; if they drop too much you will be putting undue stress onto your back, legs and torso.

Legs and stride

You will instinctively lengthen your stride and raise your knees higher in order to run faster, but long-distance runners keep their knees low and take shorter strides to conserve energy, increasing foot turnover instead. The proper stride distance is different for every person, but your feet need to land directly underneath you and your knees should remain slightly bent on impact. If your foot extends out too far in front of you, your stride is too long.

Feet

You should aim to land on the foot between the heel and midpoint, taking off when your foot is rolling forwards. Doing this rolling motion then lifting off will give you more momentum, and power-push you forward more efficiently. You shouldn't be running flat-footed; if you are, you may have the wrong trainers or need to make slight foot adjustments when running.

Ankles

There should be slight movement in your ankles. As you land they should roll inwards, allowing you to propel yourself forwards adequately. If ankles are too stiff, it could be down to tight calf muscles. Stretching should ease these off.

Indoors vs outdoors

We explore the pros and cons of both...

When it comes to running, one of the most common questions that new runners ask is whether they are better off running outside or in the gym. Often, this will come down to personal preference, but there are genuine pros and cons to both approaches.

The gym offers a cosy, warm environment, which is especially tempting in the cold, winter months. The treadmill also offers a softer running surface, which means that it can be better for preventing injury. Because of the speed controls, the treadmill makes it easy to gauge progress, and the built-in heart monitors ensure you're not working above your ability. However, being a machine, a treadmill doesn't replicate the road-running experience, which can be a problem if you are working towards an event that is outdoors. If you would rather train indoors, then make sure that you set the incline

on the treadmill to 1.5, as this is considered the most comparable setting to real road running. Also, throw in a few steeper inclines to get used to hills, or you could get a shock on race day!

Outdoor running is a completely different experience. For a start, you are open to the elements, so you need to ensure that you have the right kit for the right weather. Also, running on tarmac can be hard on joints and bones, so make sure that some of your training is on softer surfaces, like tracks, grass or sand to give your legs a break. However, being out in the fresh air – with scenery to take in – can be a real distraction from the pains of running, especially when you're starting out, and you may find it easier to keep going for longer. As you can't instantly see your speed and time, you can run at your natural pace and work to how your body feels, which is a great way to ease yourself into a running routine.

Best of both worlds

We recommend that you try a mixture of both treadmill and outdoor running when you are first getting started. Do your longer runs outside so that you have distractions around you to keep you going, and so that you get used to running on the road. Speedwork can be easier on a treadmill, as you can time your intervals exactly, and chart your progress very accurately.



What's that? Heart rate monitor: A personal monitoring device that enables you to keep an eye on your current heart rate. Most treadmills will have a chart

Top tip

Time it right

One of the problems of the treadmill is that you are relying on a machine being free when you need it, and being able to stay on for as long as you need. Try using the gym outside peak times – usually after work, between 6pm and 8pm. Also, early mornings can be more quiet, and you'll get your session over and done with!



Tarmac can be hard on your joints

Courtesy of Fitness First

showing you your optimum heart rate, but ask a trainer in the gym if you're not sure how it works.

Other exercises to complement running

Improve your running through cross-training

When you first start running, it pays to put time aside for cross-training, which means doing other types of exercise to complement your running routine.

Cross-training prevents you from overworking the same muscles every time you work out, and is also perfect for helping to build up stamina. It ensures that you work on parts of your body other than your legs, which is great for upping weight loss, and ensuring a balanced, well-formed physique. Once or twice a week, swap the road for the gym and try out some of the equipment available. The cross-trainer is a runner's friend, thanks to the fact that you can work your entire body. Many runners use the cross-trainer as a way of rehabilitating after an injury, or for logging longer distances to boost their cardio system.

Cycling is a brilliant way of getting your heart rate up and yet have little impact on your joints. A 30-minute spinning class can help to push your aerobic system to its limits, which has the benefit of ensuring that your system knows how to pull extra fuel reserves when it needs to.

Core and strength exercises warrant a dedicated session in themselves. A strong core helps you maintain a healthy, balanced body. Most running injuries come from an imbalance in your muscles; for example, aching knees can be caused by tight hips, and a weak core could see you overusing your leg muscles and adding extra impact on your joints. Things like sit-ups, lunges and squats will all help you become a better runner. Consider using your core strength session as a stretch session too, and run through all of the cool-down stretches that you would usually do after a running session, but hold the

poses for longer, breathing deeply and pushing further into the stretch as you exhale. This will prevent your muscles from tightening as you run.

Cross-training doesn't have to just take place in the gym; you can easily use your commute to work as a chance to fit in an extra session. Leave the car at home and cycle instead, or get off the bus a couple of stops earlier and power-walk the rest of the way.

Setting up a simple home circuit is another great way of fitting in a session of cross-training, as it can be done at any time with little or no equipment. Come up with a series of exercises that can be done around the house, and perform each exercise for 60 seconds, with a 15-second break in between until you complete all the exercises. Start off with one circuit, and as you get fitter, you can repeat the same circuit multiple times, with a couple of minutes break

Build strength with yoga and Pilates

Yoga and Pilates, whether done at home from a DVD or instructional manual, or as part of a group class, can have myriad benefits for runners. Yoga helps to restore muscle imbalances that can be caused by any high-impact activity, as well as stretching and lengthening overworked muscles. The standing poses, such as the Warrior, can help to build up leg strength, which will come in handy when trying to power up hills!

Pilates is all about working on your deep core muscles, which will make you a more effective runner with perfect form – a brilliant way to ensure that you don't get injured. Look around for local gym classes. There are loads of dedicated yoga and Pilates sessions available, but also look for combined classes like Body Balance (www.lesmills.com), which combines the principles of both into a formulated group exercise format.



Cross-training ideas for runners

Try the cross-trainer, rower or core work to help your running

Hold on for an extra arm workout

in between. Things like lunges, squats, press-ups, sit-ups, etc, don't require any equipment, and can be done in even the smallest of spaces. Find a couple of bottles of water, and you can use these for a range of weights exercises, such as bicep and tricep curls, shoulder presses and dead lifts. Then look at what you have around the house – a chair can be used to do tricep dips; the stairs can be used for calf raises, and a wall can be used for vertical press-ups. Use a little imagination and you can work out at home any time you like.

If you get injured when running, cross-training can ensure you keep your fitness up, so that when you're ready to run again, you don't have to start from square one. The swimming pool is perfect for those suffering from running-related injuries. Swimming has no impact on your joints, yet you can still build up a sweat. As you start to recover from your injury, then you can move onto water jogging, which means replicating exactly what you would do on the road in the water, getting you used to the motion again, and building up stamina.

Top tip

Free Weights

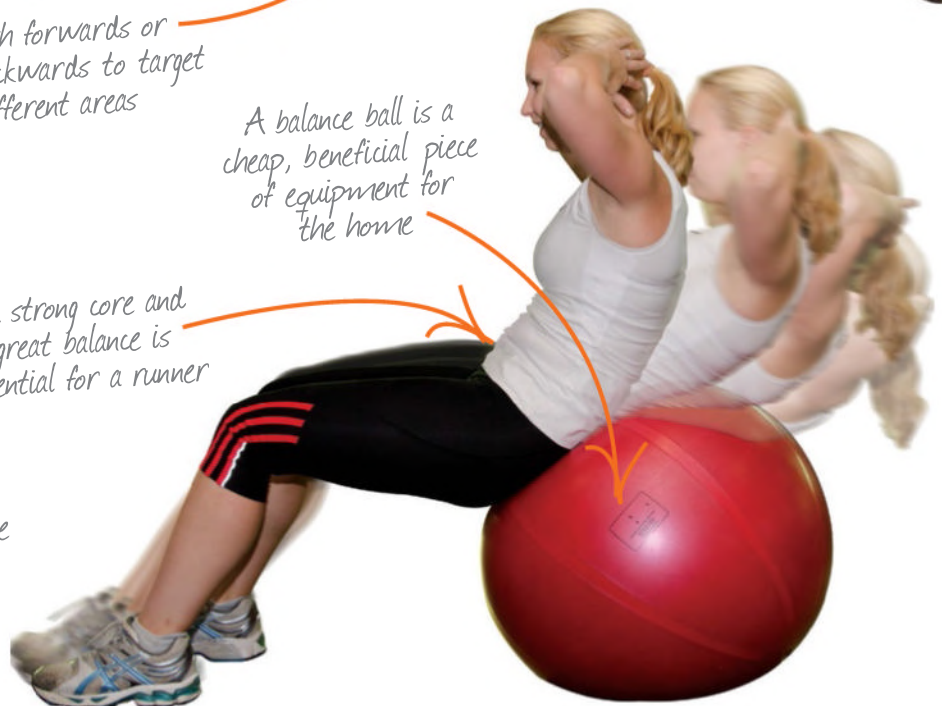
Don't be put off by the burly guys clogging up the free weights section in the gym; exercises using free weights can be adjusted to every level of fitness. Rather than the static resistance machines in the gym, free weights let you practise maintaining balance - a vital skill for runners - which also contributes to strengthening your core.

Push forwards or backwards to target different areas

A balance ball is a cheap, beneficial piece of equipment for the home

A strong core and great balance is essential for a runner

Alter the resistance strength on the side here



Complementary classes

If you're looking at supplementing your running with some exercise classes, then here is a guide to what to go for and what the benefits are

Join any gym and you will find that they offer a timetable packed to the brim with different exercise classes that you can take part in, often included in your membership or pay as you go.

Taking part in classes can work really well with your running routine. It can help you to work on areas that running doesn't cover, such as upper body strength or core toning; it can help your body to recover by doing stretching workouts; it can give you a chance to work out with others, where running is a more solitary sport; and it can help you add more cardio into your week without adding in more miles, perfect for injury prevention.

Whatever your reason, there are plenty of options for you to look through. If you need something lower-impact to complement your running, then we have already mentioned the

benefits of yoga or Pilates on the previous page. These are particularly good if you are someone who doesn't stretch enough after running, or if you have any alignment issues that affect your running form. You can also look at water-based classes, like aqua aerobics, as these give you a good workout without the impact.

If it's strength that you are looking to improve, then adding in a weights or resistance class can be a good idea. This will work muscles that don't get worked with running, and the extra strength will help you power through longer runs and get faster. By working in a class, you will be sure that you have the right form, which is very important when it comes to bodyweight or weight exercises.

There are plenty of options to give you more cardio conditioning as well, and help to improve your fitness without doing extra running

sessions. For example, you might like spinning, circuits, a martial arts class or sports training, like cardio tennis. The key is to find something that you enjoy, as it's easier to stick with.

You might find that you can combine running with some of these classes. For example, doing a run before a yoga class means that you will get a good stretch at the end of it and it works well as a cool down. You could also run the commute to a local bootcamp, using it as a warm up and cool down, so that you are ready to work hard when you get there. Just make sure that you don't try and fit everything in, or you are likely to get injured or suffer from overtraining. You want to create a fitness program that offers plenty of variety but also plenty of rest and recovery time. Achieving good form before pushing yourself too far is also a sure way of avoiding injury.

Group spinning classes

Cycling is considered to be one of the best cross-training activities for runners. So when it comes to classes, spinning is definitely up there. It's a cardiovascular class that is held in most gyms, in dedicated spin studios with stationary bikes. An instructor leads you through a virtual cycle, with hills (simulated by increasing the resistance of the bike and usually performed by standing up out of the saddle), sprints and long bouts of tempo efforts to build stamina. The advantage is that you can work your cardio system more often without having to add in extra running session, which can be kinder on your joints, as spinning is lower impact. You can work at your own pace, but you should push yourself to get the maximum benefit. Make sure that you take a towel and water though, as those small studios can get pretty hot.



Bootcamp

Bootcamps have become ever more popular in recent years and there are outdoor session running in every area, so you are sure to find one local to you. There are big names, such as British Military Fitness (www.britmilfit.com), which are run by instructors with military experience. They run classes come rain or shine, so expect to get muddy in winter months. Each class will have different ability groups, so you can work to your own pace. You can also find smaller bootcamps run by personal trainers in green spaces and urban areas alike. They often run early morning so they fit in with your work schedule. They involve small sprints or intervals of running, so they complement a training routine quite well.



CrossFit

CrossFit (www.crossfit.com) is hugely popular and there are dedicated gyms in most towns and cities. It's a fitness regime that comprises bodyweight exercises. It's often described as a mix of gymnastics and Olympic weightlifting, and includes tasks such as box jumps, pull-ups and barbell work. It has a reputation for being competitive – there are 'CrossFit games' events to compete against others – but the fundamentals are advantageous to runners. Plyometric work can make you more explosive and finish a run strong, whereas the strength work will build your core and legs. Classes involve a warm up, active training on the moves, a Workout of the Day and stretching.



BodyPump

BodyPump (www.lesmills.com/workouts/fitness-classes/bodypump) is another Les Mills class and is a popular addition to gyms. If you get enough cardio exercise through running and other activities, and you want to improve strength, this is a great class. It is structured and set to music, with each tracking working a different part of your body – back, arms, legs, core, shoulders and so on. You use a weighted bar, which should be light enough to complete the whole set but still be a challenge, and you can adapt the weight to suit the area trained in a set. You'll see results fast, and it can change your body shape in ways that cardio can't. When you first start out, focus on form and use lighter weights until you're used to the exercises.

©Thinkstock

Interval training

Lose weight and improve your stamina, fitness and lung capacity with this speedy method of training

Interval running is a type of training that incorporates short periods of high-intensity running into your workouts.

These bursts of energy should be at maximum exertion, leaving you short of breath and thoroughly exhausted by the end of the session.

These periods of high-intensive exercise are most effective when they remain short and are paced out with recovery breaks of light jogging or walking. The recovery periods are designed to lower your heart rate slightly and let your breath return to a more normal pace.

Training in this way builds up your cardiovascular system, which will improve stamina and your overall level of fitness. Elevating your heart rate over a short space of time then letting it recover will teach your lungs to perform to their best and, over time, improve your recovery time enabling you to run for longer at a faster pace.

Another positive side to intensive interval training is that it has been proven to shift more calories than longer, steadier runs. It burns more calories at the time of exercise, but it also speeds up your metabolism, meaning you are burning off calories quicker even after you have stopped working out.

Flexible, more relaxed interval training is referred to as Fartlek training. This means that you are in control of how long each burst lasts and is more suited to a beginner. Set yourself a visual goal in the distance and then sprint to it. Once you have run as fast as you possibly can to your goal, stop and take it easy until your breath returns to normal. With your breath steady, repeat the process for your workout time.

Once you feel you are getting used to the energetic bursts, you can start to structure your training a bit more by setting time goals instead of markers in the distance. Begin with 30 seconds of intense speed, then 60 seconds increasing to 90 seconds maximum. Always recover fully before picking up the pace again or you will end up feeling dizzy and sick, and won't be able to finish off the full session.



Top tip

Warm up and cool down

Never forget to do these vital parts of your workouts. Without warming up you're very likely to pull something and cooling down is necessary to eliminate the onset of muscle soreness.

Top five reasons for speed

More reasons for incorporating interval training into your week

1. Personal goals

Interval training will dramatically improve your cardiovascular system. Stronger heart and lungs will enable you to train better for longer periods without getting so out of breath, helping you to reach your distance goals.



3. Variety

Adding a few different types of running into your week will help rid any possible chance of boredom. It also helps to structure your regime knowing exactly what you will be doing on set days.

4. Any time, anywhere

Train at the gym on the treadmill and use the timer for 30 seconds of speed; alternatively run outside and use bus stops or lampposts as your goals. Keep a note of your progress and see how quickly you're improving and how great you're feeling.

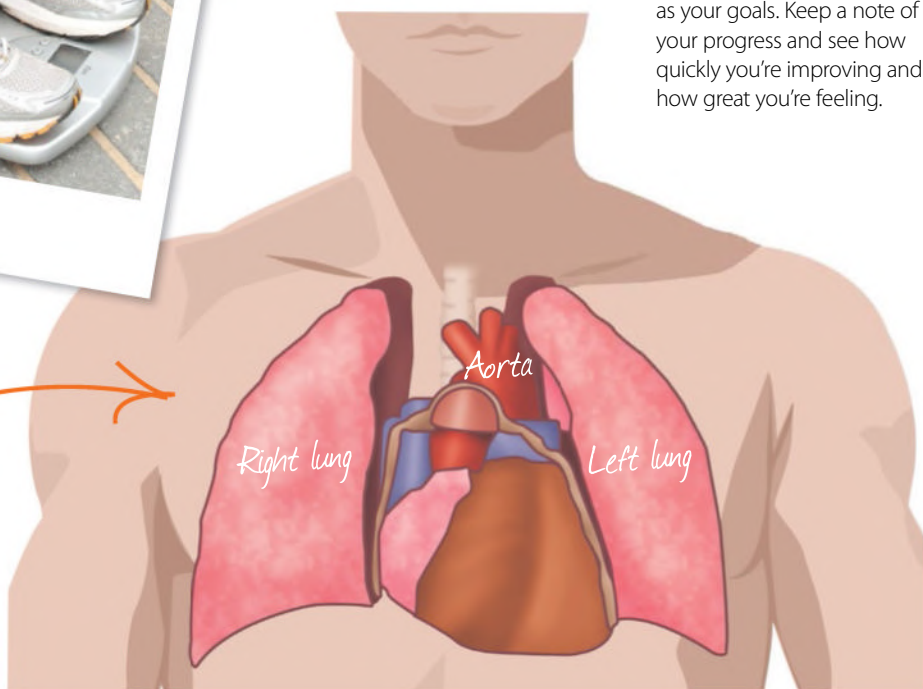
2. Weight loss

Running faster means you are putting in more effort resulting in more calories burnt. As well as burning more calories your metabolism is sped up, plus the other effects on your body will lead to a more toned and defined shape.



5. Internal boosts

As well as speeding up your metabolism, speed work also strengthens your heart and lungs, improving your fitness from the inside. If you're worried about pushing yourself too far, invest in a heart-rate monitor, which tracks your BPM during exercise so you can train safely.



Post-injury running

Don't rush back into training after an injury has set you back.
Treat the area with caution or you could make it worse

Returning to running after an injury is a slow and steady process. Jumping straight back into your training programme will most likely result in the problem reoccurring, or even getting worse, sidelining you for longer.

When injured, you can continue with other low-impact forms of exercise, such as swimming, cycling, rowing or cross-training, as long as it doesn't hurt the area in question. Ideally, you should leave the area for at least a week and always wait for the swelling to subside before recommending a training programme. It is vital to use your common sense and listen to your body.

Once the pain begins to ease off and you feel almost back to normal, keep cross-training for an extra week to ensure that everything is healed. It can be hard to take it easy – we've all been there – but going back to running too soon will end up with you being in more pain and having to rest for longer. Continually training on an injury could transform a small problem into a massive injury, such as a stress fracture or torn ligament, resulting in you needing to take months off.

Never return to running until you can walk completely pain free for 30 minutes. If there is even the smallest amount of pain stop and return to a lower-impact exercise. Once you can

walk pain free, start to incorporate a few short, easy runs on softer ground into your week. If possible run on sand, grass or tracks, but only if the problem isn't in the ankle or calf regions, as these surfaces can worsen the problem.

If the pain is in your feet or legs, then check that the trainers you're currently wearing are not too old (they should be replaced every 300 miles or so), and that they are suited to your feet and running style.

We can't stress enough how returning to exercise after an injury needs to be a gradual thing. A few weeks of taking it easy doesn't seem so bad if you think of how serious an injury could get if ignored and left untreated.

Cold and flu: should I run?

Feeling sniffly, poorly and run down? Perhaps a rest is needed

Pushing yourself too much will only leave you feeling worse and could make your illness last longer. However, if you have a slight sniffle or feel a little tired, then exercise can actually give the much-needed boost that your body needs. Flushing your body with endorphins will lift your mood and restore your appetite, repairing your body quicker.

The general rule is that if you're feeling ill from the neck down, such as in the chest, then avoid running until you feel completely well. Headaches, runny noses and a tickly throat won't get any worse from running, but take it easy. Anything more serious requires rest and never run with a high fever.



“If you feel ill from the neck down, like in the chest, avoid running until you're well”



When not to run

1. Neck down

If you're feeling unwell in any way other than a runny nose, then skip the run. Overexertion will only drain you of the last bits of energy your body has, which could be better used getting you well. Start running again only when you feel completely better.

2. Sharp pain

If pain hits you hard and fast when running, stop immediately to rest it or it could turn into a more serious injury. Get home slowly and then RICE – rest, ice, compress and elevate – the injured area. Resume running only when you can walk and gently jog with no pain at all.



3. Excessive aches

Running can ease off heavy aching muscles making you feel as good as new, however if the aching doesn't fade after your warm up, then call it quits. Restart when you're feeling recovered and happy to continue; pushing yourself will lead to more injury.

4. Continuous pain

If a specific area has been causing you pain for a while and not getting any better or worse, then stop and apply the RICE treatment every 20 minutes over the course of an evening. If symptoms persist and swelling remains, then visit your doctor to get checked over.

5. Injured area

After an injury has occurred, only return to running if you can walk pain free for 30 minutes or more. Never return to running until completely healed, as overtraining on an injured area will only make it worse.

Overtraining and the risks

Don't fall foul of this common novice runner's complaint

When you first start out running, your enthusiasm can lead you to create a schedule that is overly ambitious – and while we always applaud enthusiasm, overtraining can become a real problem and one that can have long-term consequences.

We have compiled a list of the most common signs of overtraining in our boxout and if you can tick more than a couple of these, it's a sign that you need to cut back. If you are constantly sore, exhausted and ill, then you're not going to find the willpower to go out for another run. And if you do drag yourself out for one, it's going to feel a lot harder than usual, which can dent your motivation. Overtraining isn't just about doing too much too soon, it is also a lack

you want to go longer or go faster? Each week increase your mileage or your time by around ten per cent on your longest run. So, if you have mastered the three-mile or 30-minute route around the block, take it up to around three and a half miles or 35 minutes the next week. And you don't have to increase every week – wait until you're comfortable at a set distance or time before stepping it up. Vary your workouts too. Do one session of long, steady running, one that incorporates intervals of fast running for various distances and one with some off-road elements included as well.

If you think that you are suffering from overtraining, don't just give up! You can get yourself back on track with a few changes. Ensure that you can be flexible with your

"You can get yourself back on track with a few changes and a flexible schedule"

of decent recovery between sessions, which is why rest days are just as important as running days when you are planning a running routine. Overtraining doesn't just affect your running life either; tiredness, lack of appetite, loss of sex drive, inability to concentrate properly... all of these side effects can have a serious impact on your day-to-day life too.

Overtraining isn't just something that affects beginners either, as runners of all abilities, even elites, can suffer from this common problem. The key to not falling foul is to ensure that your training programme is right for you. First, make sure that when you start out running you are not hitting the tarmac on two consecutive days. Take the day after a run as a rest day, or if you really want to do something, then consider a swim, yoga class or a walk instead. As you get fitter, don't be tempted to ramp up your mileage too fast and try and up your speed. Determine what is most important to you; do

schedule. If you don't feel up for a long run, can you swap it for a shorter one instead? If you are aching from your last run, you could go for a swim. If your head isn't in the right place, then you are more likely to suffer the consequences of forcing yourself out running. Don't be afraid to break out of your schedule if it's not working – a relaxed approach to running means that you are unlikely to push too hard and you will enjoy it all the more.

Make sure that you are eating well too, as you need carbs to fuel your body and protein to help it recover. Get plenty of fruit and vegetables too, as these will help your immune system and keep those colds at bay.

Prevention is the best cure for overtraining, but if it's too late, then take a complete week off before implementing a new, more relaxed running routine. This will give your body the chance to recover and repair, as well as enable you to get your head back in the right place.

The symptoms of overtraining

These are the most common signs that you are overtraining and it's time to rest

Muscle soreness

You have to expect a certain level of aching after a good run, but if you're taking longer to get over the soreness in your legs, your body may be struggling to keep up with the demands. Also, if you keep running with an injury, it will take longer to heal.

Catching a cold

If you are overexerting your body, then you are putting a lot of pressure on your immune system and this could result in more frequent colds. Taking time out every week to relax will help your body fight off these common bugs, and don't continue to exercise when you're really not well.

Loss of appetite

You need to eat to recover from your running sessions, but if you don't fancy that plate of food in front of you, then you might have pushed yourself too hard. Take a rest day and get plenty of carbs and protein into your system.

Fitful sleep

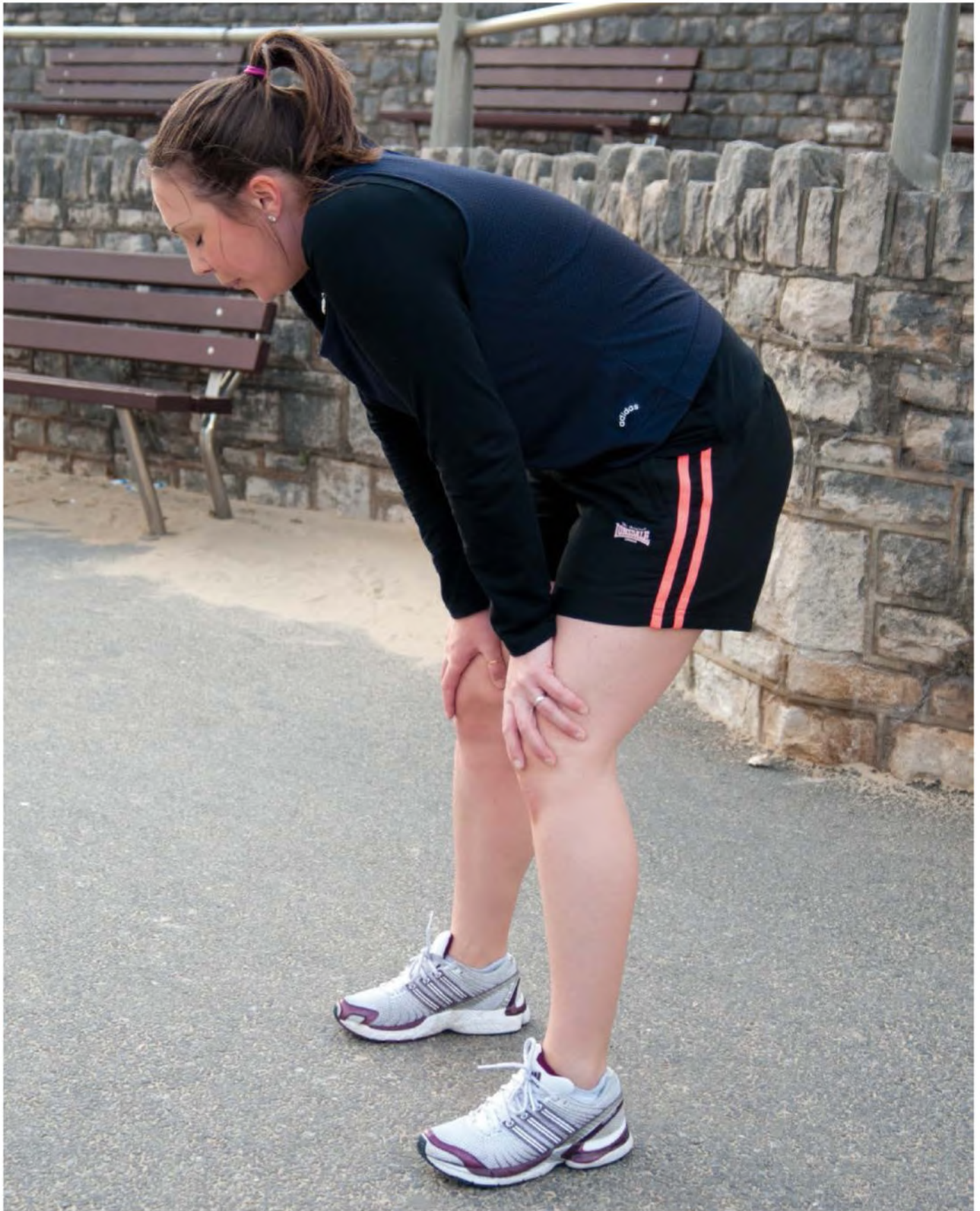
If you are working your body hard in every training session, then it is going to take longer to recover and it can take time until the body settles down ready for sleep. To be a successful runner, a good night's sleep is essential, so finish your sessions at least two hours before bed.

Harder sessions

If you are going out for the same distance as usual but finding it harder to keep going, then you could be suffering from overtraining. Your body can't keep pushing indefinitely, and if you are doing session after session, it will feel harder to keep up.

Lack of motivation

With all of the above going on in your life it's not uncommon to fall out of love with running. Don't go out too hard, burning out and giving up – just make sure that you rest and recover properly between sessions.



How to recover properly after a run

Recovery is an essential part of any training programme both to prevent and recuperate from injury

We mention the importance of recovery throughout this book, as it is vital to becoming a successful runner. Even from when you go out for your first run, you need to be thinking about recovery. There are lots of different kinds of recovery you need to be aware of: rest days, active recovery and post-injury recovery.

The first of these is something that we all need to be doing. Taking a set number of rest days every week is one of the easiest ways to prevent injury and overtraining. When you first start out running, we advise that you never run on consecutive days. You can cross-train on days after a run, but make sure that at least twice a week you rest completely. This enables your body to heal any small muscle tears and soreness, which will help you to become a stronger runner in the long run. You can use these rest days to stretch out your muscles if they are tired and to have a hot bath to help the recovery process.

When you start running more and more, you may start to hear about active recovery. This is usually only associated with long-distance running, especially half marathons and marathons. This is when you run a couple of easy miles the day after a long run session. This helps to stop the muscles from tightening, as well as flushing waste products from the legs. When you first start running, it is unlikely that you will need to worry about active running recovery. You may find, however, that doing something active helps to reduce aching muscles, so consider swimming or walking on your rest days when you have built up a strong running base.

Recovery after a race is also important, as you tend to run faster than usual so you need to recover more. A general rule of thumb is that you should take one rest day for every

mile of the race so, for a 5K, which is 3.1 miles, a clear three days before running again is recommended as rest time.

By ensuring that you take rest days, then you can prevent injuries caused by overtraining, but none of us are immune from other kinds of minor injuries such as pulled muscles, shin splints, twisted ankles and sore knees. These injuries tend to heal themselves, in anything from a week to a month, but as soon as you feel something hurting, stop running. Take a few days of complete rest and ice the area that hurts if there is inflammation. Stretch the area gently to help with its recovery. When the pain subsides, you can try some cross-training to strengthen the area again, but don't attempt to run until you can walk comfortably with no pain.

As part of the recovery process, you need to step back in your running. You can't go straight back where you left off. For your first run, take walk breaks and only go out for half the time

or distance that you were doing when you got injured. Over the next couple of weeks, you can start to build back up your distance and time until you are back up to normal.

The more serious the injury, the more recovery time that you need to take. For sprains, tears and breaks, listen to your doctor as they will tell you when you are ready to go back to running. It only takes about two weeks for your fitness to begin to drop off, but you will be able to build back up faster than starting from scratch. The key is to listen to your body.

Top tip

List your recovery

When you are planning a training schedule, make sure that you give your recovery days the same treatment as your running days. Block them out in your diary and you will be less tempted to try and squeeze in an extra run. Recovery is key to a training programme at any level, so treat it with the same importance.



Ice sore areas to reduce swelling and keep the area elevated too

Eating for recovery

1. Protein

Protein helps to repair muscles and strengthen them. Find it in chicken, fish and nuts, or try protein shakes after a run.



2. Calcium

Calcium-rich foods help to build strong bones, which is essential to running with all that impact being forced through your body.



3. Vitamins and minerals

Iron helps to build blood, zinc can help heal wounds, vitamin C can build a strong immune system. Ensure you get a good variety in your daily diet.



4. Good fats

Include sources of Omega 3, including flaxseed, tofu, fish and walnuts, for example, as the muscles use these for energy.

5. Carbohydrates

Complex carbs, like brown rice and wholemeal pasta, give you slow-release energy to help refuel after a run.



Always include plenty of stretches as part of your recovery programme



Racing

106

Prepare for your first race and overcome nerves

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Racing

Discover the benefits of racing, how to enter your first race, running for charity and being prepared when you get to the start line

- 88** **Racing for beginners**
Enter your first race today
- 94** **Follow a training plan**
Meet your target race goal
- 96** **The next phase**
Progress from 5K to 10K
- 98** **Going the distance**
Prepare for a half marathon
- 100** **Can I run a marathon?**
Marathon training for beginners
- 102** **Running an OCR**
Get down and dirty with mudruns
- 104** **Staying motivated**
Learn to stay focused
- 106** **Get ready for a first race**
Top tips for race day
- 108** **Being prepared**
Get everything ready in advance
- 110** **Pace your race**
The best way to finish strong
- 112** **Running for charity**
See who you could help
- 114** **Different race types**
Try something a bit different



88

Find out how to enter a race and set a goal



104 Learn how to stay motivated



110 Top tips to help you pace your race



112 Explore the idea of running for charity



100 You are allowed to run and walk a marathon

Racing for beginners

Whether you have been running for five minutes or five years, entering a race is a surefire way to increase motivation, boost progress and meet new goals

When you first start out, the thought of doing a race might be the last thing on your mind, however there are many good reasons why you should start to think about it from the very beginning.

Not only will it help your motivation and give you something to aim for, but it is also a way to celebrate all your hard work at getting up and running. That first medal will become a symbol of just what you can do when you put your mind to it. Here we take a look at the benefits of entering a race.

Set a goal

As a new runner, you are probably full of motivation to get out there and run, but this initial feeling of joy can soon pass, because bad weather puts you off or you are not seeing results as fast as you would like.

A race can really help with this, as it gives you a time frame in which to reach a certain

distance. Book in for a race early on in your training, giving yourself plenty of time to train properly and get up to speed. Once you have a race planned, you can formulate a training schedule that increases gradually each week up until race day, making sure that this is realistic

and includes rest days and cross-training. Having a plan to stick to is a surefire way to keep your motivation up, as you won't want to let yourself down. It also means that you can plan running into your diary in advance so that other things don't sneak in and end up taking priority. Let your friends and family know that you have signed up for a race and that it is important to you, so that they can respect that you have to

set time aside for running and be supportive and encouraging when you need a boost.

Racing also gives your running a sense of purpose. While there are many great reasons to run, such as weight loss, these are long-term plans. Races give you a more immediate goal,

“That first medal will become a symbol of just what you can do when you put your mind to it”

one that you can easily measure yourself by. Things like weight loss can take a long time to see results, so it pays to have other goals and see your weight loss as a side effect so that you don't become disillusioned. Racing can help you to break down bigger goals. Say your aim is to one day run a marathon. Start by entering a 5K and see how you go. Once you have completed that first race, you'll realise that you can do anything that you put your mind to, and you can think about entering a 10K, a 10-miler and then a half marathon. By the time you get around to entering a marathon you will be so well prepared and used to the process of training that it is a lot easier to envisage.

Entering races also helps you to break out of a rut. If you always do the same three-mile loop around the neighbourhood then you are no longer pushing yourself to see what more you can achieve. Sign up for a race that is longer than what you have ever run before and it will push you to keep progressing in your training. You might find that you prefer shorter distances, in which case enter lots of 5Ks and work on hitting a speed goal instead. This will encourage you to add more speedwork into your training, shaking up your routine.

Entering a race can be a great way to improve confidence in your own abilities. It is easy to forget our progress as we trudge our way around the block night after night. It can be a lonely sport at times if you are running alone



Women-only events can be less daunting for your first race if you're a female runner

Pick a race that you will find fun
yet challenging. Try a fancy dress
themed one such as the
Great Gorilla Run



© Great Gorilla Run / The Gorilla Organisation

Racing

and without a measure of success it can be easy to lose sight of where you started. A race is a massive confidence booster. Not only will you complete a distance that you might have once thought impossible, but you will find that there are people you are better than at the race. You will overtake other runners – we promise, there will always be someone who isn't prepared! – and realise how good you have become.

Racing is a great way to test yourself, too. Being in an organised environment with an accurate completion time shows what level you are at over that distance and it gives you a goal to beat in the future. As such, it is the perfect way to track progress. Don't enter races every month for a new PB, but try to race once every two months to see how you are improving. You can enter other races in between, but do these for fun, for the enjoyment of the experience. If you aim for your best time each and every time you race, you will find it difficult to see significant improvement.

Finally, racing is a good way to get your family and friends involved in what you are doing. It's difficult for them to see how you are getting on if you are disappearing into the night three times a week. By inviting them to support you at an event, they can clearly see how far you have come and what you have achieved, and it's nice to get a bit of acknowledgement. You never know, you might even get them inspired to join you for future races too!

Racing for good causes

Racing is often linked to fundraising for charity. Many people take up running in the first place because of something happening in their personal life – maybe they get through an illness, or a friend has something happen to them – and they want to support a related charity in some way. This is a really good reason to get involved in running and it can help with your motivation during the race. You know that you can't give up when someone is relying on

you to finish your race and donate the money you've raised to a good cause.

It is hard to balance training and fundraising, but you need to ensure that you set aside enough time for both. You need to work hard to raise as much money as possible, as every pound will help you get through the race; but you also need to ensure that you are well trained so that you can complete your race. This is why it is best to go for something that you really believe in; it will motivate you to keep going when it gets tough.

If you don't have a personal charity that you want to run for, then you can choose a local charity or national charity that you want to support the work of. For inspiration, see if the race that you are entering has a supported charity that it works with, as this could be someone that you could raise money for.

Some events are organised by charities, such as the Heroes Run, which means that by entering you are committing to raising money



It's always a fantastic feeling once you have completed your first-ever race – now time to celebrate!



*Run for a charity
you feel strongly
about*



*Dress up and run with
friends and family*



*Relax and celebrate
after an event*



*The pre-race atmosphere
will get rid of those nerves*

Running for charity

Race for a good cause and for extra motivation

If you have ever watched a running race, whether a small local event or a big televised race, then you will have seen a heavy charity presence. Local runs tend to support a local charity, but for large events, you can pick any charity to run in aid of. There are also races organised by charities, to help raise funds, such as the Race For Life and Heroes Run.

Choosing to run for charity is a great way of helping motivation as well as a good cause,

as we discuss in the main text. If you want to run for a charity and you have a place in an up-coming race, no matter how short or long, you can approach a charity that you are interested in supporting and ask them for a fundraising pack. This will give you lots of ideas on how you can raise money for your charity. If you are running in a big national event like the Great South Run or the London Marathon, you can ask to join a charity team,

which means that you will get a race T-shirt, often with your name on it, and you'll be treated to cheers from support stations organised by the charities around the route.

It can really help to keep you going when you know that you are being supported by people united by a common cause. If you don't already have a place, then you may need to apply for a Golden Bond place, which we mention in the 'Balloted events' boxout.

Balloted events

Big events may allocate race places via a type of lottery

The majority of races that you will enter will be first come first served, meaning that as long as you sign up early enough, you will get a place. Some even allow entry on the day if they have not filled up. But really big events, notably popular marathons and half marathons, are oversubscribed year on year, so to keep things fair the places are allocated via a ballot. You sign up within a set time period, often having to pay up front, but not always. You will then be told if you have a place once the ballot has been drawn. It can be a difficult, long wait, especially if you have your heart set on the particular event, but it is best not to get your hopes up and come up with a backup plan so that you will still be able to race when you want to.

Some events have what is known as Golden Bond places, which are places pre-assigned to charities. Anyone can apply for these places, which are separate to the ballot, but they usually carry a registration fee and a minimum amount that will need to be raised. This is to ensure that runners who take these places are serious about running for charity, rather than just finding an easy way in, so make sure you have the time and the motivation to raise the money, which can be thousands, before applying for a Golden Bond place. Golden Bond places are also available in races that are not balloted, but are likely to sell out.



for that charity as well as running the race. They will usually provide you with a sponsorship form to help you get started. We have more advice on how you can actually raise money on page 112.

Entering that first race

Okay, so now you know that racing has many benefits, how do you actually go about getting involved? For your first-ever race, it is best to stay local as the extra stress of having to arrange travel and accommodation if you are going for a race in another location will only give you more to worry about. Luckily, you never have to go far to find a good race, as there will be events, both big and small, in every city and town.

Decide whether you want to go for a small field, where the runners number only a couple of hundred or a big event with thousands of runners. There are advantages to both. A smaller race will mean that you can run at your own pace, undisturbed by anyone around you. However, it also means that there will be less support en route and it can get quite lonely. A larger race means that you are surrounded by people and it will pull more spectators. Once you have decided what you want to go for, you then need to pick a distance. It is best to start with a 5K, as this will give you a chance to experience the race atmosphere and get used to things like timing your way to the start, running with a crowd and pacing yourself over a manageable distance. Even if you are completely new to running, 5K is a realistic goal to aim for, as long as you give yourself enough time to prepare – anything from eight to twelve weeks will be fine.

Now that you have chosen the kind of race that you want to do, you need to find an event. The road-racing season tends to run from March to October, though there are races outside that. The big group events, like Race For Life, for example, will usually run over the summer months. Bear this in mind when you are planning your first race. Throughout the winter months is usually when you will find good trail races, rather than those on the road, so pick a surface that you want to run on to help guide your choice.

You can find local events through running clubs in the area. Simply run a web search for running clubs in your local area, for example, and go to their websites to see event listings. Every running club will organise, or be involved

with the coordination of, a local event and this is a good way to get involved. You can also use race listings websites (see the 'Race resources' column across the page) to find a list of races within a certain distance of your location. These can usually be filtered by distance and surface type too. If you know you want to take part in a big national series of runs, then it's best to go directly to their website and see where the nearest event to you is being held.

Entering a race can usually be done online these days. In some small local events, you may still have to fill in a form and return with a cheque, but this is rare. You will need to input information like your name, age and address, and sometimes your best time for the event distance – this is often the case in events that stagger the start based on predicted finish times, so that faster runners can go off first. Prices vary; local events can be as low as a fiver, but expect to pay around £10-£12 to enter a race. Bigger national and charity events can cost more. The fees cover the cost of marshalling, toilets, goodie bags, chip timing and the like, which allows the event to be put on to a good standard. Usually fees are non-refundable, so even if you have to pull out nearer the time, there is no guarantee that you will get your money back. Some races will let you defer your place to the next year, but check the race rules and regulations for details on this.

Once you have entered, you will not hear anything until a couple of weeks before the race when you receive your race pack. This includes your race number, which you need to safety pin to the front of your T-shirt. You will usually get a baggage label too, which is attached to your kit bag if you want to leave this at the baggage drop for collecting after the race. You will get a list of rules, course information, where the water stops are, first aid advice and so on, in the pack. Read these very carefully as each race will have its own quirks and unique factors to come to terms with. Finally, you may get a timing chip if the race is chip timed. This will come with instructions of how it should be attached to ensure that your time is recorded.

Now you have everything you need to take part in the race. As long as you are prepared and have trained properly, it will be an experience that you will enjoy and never forget. You'll meet new people and feel really proud. Once you've done one race, we're sure that you'll get the bug to keep going and improving on your time and distance, over and over again.



This is what you are aiming to cross; it will be one of the best feelings you will experience

"Once you've done one race, we're sure that you'll get the bug"

Top tip

Race timing

In a big race, there may be a delay between the start gun being fired and you crossing the start. That means that the time on the clock when you finish is not accurate to how long it took you to run the race. If your race is not chip timed, use a stopwatch and start it going as you cross the start line, stopping it when you finish, so you have a more accurate time.

Race resources

Find your first race with one of these websites

Runner's World

www.runnersworld.co.uk
www.runnersworld.com

Go to the Events page and you can search for an event by location, date and distance to see all future races in your local area.

Race For Life

www.raceforlife.org

Check out this website to get dates of all the Race For Life events around the UK. They can sell out fast, so get in early.

Good Run Guide

www.goodrunguide.co.uk

This website is good for finding local UK races, as you can enter your postcode and a distance from that location to list all available races.

Cool Running

www.coolrunning.com

This site has a good engine that is primarily designed for finding races in the USA and Canada, though it also has a whole host of runs in other countries too.

Local running clubs

Various

Local races tend to be organised by running clubs, so go online (Gumtree often has ads up for clubs) to find ones in your area to see the events they have going on.

Follow a race training plan

Why it pays to stick to a schedule to become a better runner

Health magazines and running books are always full of training plans for you to follow to build up your running skills practicably.

While you can just lace up your trainers and start running every other day, a structured training plan is more beneficial. For a start, having written down exactly what you want to achieve each week makes it easier to stick to your plans. Form a schedule around your current weekly tasks and it will be easier to stick to it; literally place the runs in your diary as can't-miss events alongside doctor's appointments and meetings to give them the same importance. Write them on the family calendar, so that the household knows when you need time to run and how long you will be out.

Training plans also help you to progress your running. It is easy to get stuck in a rut and keep running the same route for the same time over and over again. The problem with this is that you will hit an inevitable plateau where you won't be pushing your fitness and your body will get used to your routine. You will find the sessions easier and easier, and your body will require less exertion to complete them. This in turn means that you will be burning less calories, so if you got into running for weight-loss reasons then you will stop losing weight, and if your diet stays the same, you might even start to gain weight again.

A structured plan keeps you moving forward, which means that you will continue to get faster and fitter, to keep challenging your body and meeting your goals. Plans also ensure that you build up your running little and often, which prevents injury and overtraining. Of course, training plans are rarely a one-fits-all solution.

Finding a plan that suits you means figuring out what your priorities are. First, determine how much time you can commit to running. If you only have two free days a week, then there is no point trying to stick to a five-day-a-week

running plan. When you know how many times you can run, you then need to think about your goals. Are you running for fitness or stress relief, to lose weight or to meet a time or distance goal? When you have this decided, start looking for a plan that meets your needs as closely as possible. Websites like www.runnersworld.co.uk / www.runnersworld.com have plans for runners of all abilities and for all distances. Once you have a plan, we recommend writing down the sessions in your diary straight away, for at least the next couple of weeks ahead.

When you begin a plan, you should also start a training diary. This is simply a log of each and every run that you undertake. Write down the date, the time of day that you ran, how long and how far you ran for, how you felt during the run and any notes, such as aches and pains, stomach discomfort, tiredness and similar details. As you progress, you can look back at these notes and show yourself how far you have come. It also helps you to find patterns. For example, you might find that running at certain times of the day is harder than others, or that certain foods can lead to greater discomfort when running. All of this helps you to develop a running schedule that works for you.

When you decide to enter a race, then it is worth following a dedicated training plan for that particular distance. Most training plans for races last from eight weeks for a 5K, to 12 weeks for a 10K or half marathon, and 16 weeks for a marathon. These training plans are designed to be used for the race training period only, as they are more intense than your usual day-to-day training and the end goal is getting the best result out of your race. These plans usually have further goals, such as just finishing or finishing within a set time, so pick the one that is best for what you want to achieve. After a race, take a couple of weeks to recover, doing the odd few runs, before falling back into a more regular training routine to maintain your fitness.

Run your first 5K

Week 1	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 5 mins, run 1 min. Repeat three times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 10 mins, slowly jog 5 mins, walk 10 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 30 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 15 mins
Week 2	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 5 mins, run 2 mins. Repeat three times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 9 mins, slowly jog 6 mins, walk 10 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 30 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 15 mins
Week 3	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 5 mins, run 3 mins. Repeat three times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 8 mins, slowly jog 8 mins, walk 8 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 30 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 15 mins

with our 12-week training plan

Week 4	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 3 mins, run 2 mins. Repeat five times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 8 mins, slowly jog 9 mins, walk 8 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 30 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 20 mins
Week 5	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 3 mins, run 3 mins. Repeat five times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 9 mins, slowly jog 10 mins, walk 9 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 30 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 20 mins
Week 6	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 4 mins, run 4 mins. Repeat three times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 10 mins, slowly jog 10 mins, walk 10 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 30 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 25 mins

Week 7	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 2 mins, run 3 mins. Repeat five times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 10 mins, slowly jog 10 mins, walk 10 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 40 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 25 mins
Week 8	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 3 mins, run 4 mins. Repeat four times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 8 mins, slowly jog 12 mins, walk 8 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 40 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 25 mins
Week 9	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 2 mins, run 5 mins. Repeat four times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 10 mins, slowly jog 15 mins, walk 5 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 40 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 30 mins

Week 10	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 1 min, run 5 mins. Repeat five times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 5 mins, slowly jog 20 mins, walk 5 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 45 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 40 mins
Week 11	
Monday	Interval session: Walk 2 mins, run 6 mins. Repeat four times
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Endurance: Walk 6 mins, slowly jog 18 mins, walk 6 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 45 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Long run: Run/walk 35 mins
Week 12	
Monday	Steady run: Slowly jog 25 mins
Tuesday	Rest day
Wednesday	Steady run: Slowly jog 20 mins
Thursday	Rest day
Friday	Cross-train: Up to 40 mins
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Race day – 5K



The next phase of racing

Move onto the most popular running distance, the 10k

Once you have reached your 5K goal, the next logical distance to take on is the 10K. We stick to judging distances by kilometres still at this stage, as thinking in miles (6.2) always seems far more daunting.

Reaching the 5K distance is tough, but getting to this goal is the hardest part. Once you know you can run non-stop for 30-40 minutes you can increase your weekly mileage slowly but surely to get up to that magical one hour plus mark which will equate to a 10K.

By now your body is used to the motion of running, the pounding and exertion is familiar, so you will find that increasing the distance will seem easier than you think. Taking it slow and steady is the key, then once you know you can cover the distance, you can build on pace.

Following and sticking to a training plan is even more important for a 10K race. You need to ensure you're training sensibly and not increasing your running distances too steeply or rapidly as this will lead to injury. As well as an increased risk of injury from over training, you will need to find more time needs to be committed to your new hobby. However, don't rush your runs and then suffer the consequences of achy muscles; you want to enjoy your running not over train so you start to hate going out - remember this is for pleasure.

10K races are filled with more experienced and competitive runners but never let this put you off. When it comes to race day avoid the front-runners, let them shoot off into the distance and just concentrate on your race. Many 10K runs have the start lines organised by expected race times, so if you see yourself running a one hour race stand in this group and so on. Having this system in place is a comfort for many runners as it does take away the temptation to rush off at the start and burn out quickly. If this still seems too daunting, then sign up for a 10K for Cancer Research race or

a smaller local run. These races are filled with slower runners at the same level as you or just fewer people to be swept along with.

The 10K training plan we have devised for you is for beginners, but assuming you have taken on the 5K plan first for experience and general fitness. As with the 5K training plan, we know this schedule won't suit all runners but try it out for the first few weeks and then adjust it to suit your commitments. You can swap days around. If you feel Saturdays are your busiest days then swap your long run to the Sunday. Work it to suit you. Never cram all your long runs in together as this will leave you tired, drained and feeling negative about your running. If you miss a run, it's okay. Just continue with the rest of your plan and remain positive.

At the beginning and end of each session make sure you walk for five to ten minutes to warm up or cool down. This will get your muscles prepared for the work out and to relax them back afterwards, limiting the chance of aches and pains. Remembering this will help you with the faster runs built into this schedule which will push your body harder, improving your pace and skills, helping your overall performance. Also included each week are cross train days so that you're not over using muscle groups. Working in alternative sessions such as swimming, cycling and weights will keep you fit and healthy, improve your stamina and fitness levels, allowing your muscles time to recover.

By the time race day comes around, you will feel nervous and that you won't be able to complete the challenge. But if you have followed the training plan as closely as possible, then you will do fine. Take it easy and don't get swept along with other faster runners as you will burn out too quickly and end up slowing to a walk, leaving you feel frustrated. As with any distance, practice makes perfect, so the more races you sign up to, the fitter and faster you will become. Just never forget to enjoy it.

Move from 5K to

Week 1	
Monday	Slow jog for 10 mins, walk 2 mins. Repeat 3 times
Tuesday	Cross train – Fast walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 40 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Cross train – Cross trainer, cycle, swim, weights and stretch for 40 mins
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	Jog for 20 mins at a comfortable pace, walk 3 mins. Repeat again
Sunday	Rest day
Week 2	
Monday	Slow jog for 15 mins, 4 x 2 mins faster running with 2 mins walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 mins
Tuesday	Cross train – Walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 40 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Cross train – Cross trainer, cycle, swim, weights and stretch for 40 mins
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	Jog for 25 mins at a comfortable steady pace, walk 3 mins, run for 15 mins
Sunday	Rest day
Week 3	
Monday	Slow jog for 15 mins, 4 x 2 mins faster running with 1 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 mins
Tuesday	Cross train – Walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 45 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Cross train – Cross trainer, cycle, swim, weights and stretch for 45 mins
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	Jog for 30 mins at a comfortable steady pace, walk 2 mins, run for 10 mins
Sunday	Rest day

10K with this training plan

* **Fartlek running** - bursts of fast sprinting for any amount of time, just to raise your heart rate and pace. Set lamppost goals when outside running.

Week 4	
Monday	Slow jog for 15 mins, 4 x 3 mins faster running with 1.5 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 minutes
Tuesday	Cross train – Fast walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 45 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Cross train – Cross trainer, cycle, swim, weights and stretch for 45 mins
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	5K or 35 minutes continuous running
Sunday	Rest day
Week 5	
Monday	Slow jog for 20 mins, 4 x 3 mins faster running with 1.5 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 15 mins
Tuesday	Cross train – Walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 50 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Run for 30 minutes including slow hills and fartlek running
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	6K or 40 mins continuous running
Sunday	Rest day
Week 6	
Monday	Slow jog for 15 mins, 4 x 3 mins faster running with 1.5 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 mins
Tuesday	Cross train – Walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 50 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Run for 30 mins including slow hills and fartlek running
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	7K or 45 mins continuous running
Sunday	Rest day

Week 7	
Monday	Slow jog for 20 mins, 4 x 3 mins faster running with 1.5 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 mins
Tuesday	Cross train – Fast walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 60 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Run for 40 minutes including slow hills and fartlek running
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	8K or 50 mins continuous running
Sunday	Rest day
Week 8	
Monday	Slow jog for 20 mins, 5 x 3 mins faster running with 1 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 mins
Tuesday	Cross train – Walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 60 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Run for 40 mins including slow hills and fartlek running
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	8K or 55 mins continuous running
Sunday	Rest day
Week 9	
Monday	Slow jog for 25 mins, 5 x 3 mins faster running with 1 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 mins
Tuesday	Cross train – Walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 60 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Run for 50 mins including slow hills and fartlek running
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	9K or 60 mins continuous
Sunday	Rest day

Week 10	
Monday	Jog for 30 mins, 5 x 3 mins faster running with 1 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 mins
Tuesday	Cross trainer, cycle, swim, weights and stretching for 60 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Run for 45 mins including slow hills and fartlek running
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	10K or 70 minutes continuous running
Sunday	Rest day
Week 11	
Monday	Jog for 30 mins, 5 x 3 mins faster running with 1 min walk breaks in between, slow jog for 10 mins
Tuesday	Cross train – Walk, cycle, swim or cross train for 60 mins
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	Run for 50 mins including slow hills and fartlek running
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	8K or 55 mins continuous running
Sunday	Rest day
Week 12	
Monday	30 mins gentle jog
Tuesday	Cross train, 40-60 mins cross trainer, bike, swim, weights and stretching
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	40 minute gentle jog
Friday	Rest day
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Race day



Going the distance

A real challenge, the half marathon is a big step up

If you have been following the plans in this book, you will hopefully have achieved your first 5K and 10K race goals. Once you are comfortable running both these distances, then it is only natural to start looking forward once again.

While there is an increasing number of 10-mile races these days, the most popular distance up from a 10K is the half-marathon. This is a huge step in comparison from 5K to 10K. You are more than doubling the distance to 13.1 miles (or 21K if you prefer).

The half-marathon is perfectly achievable for anyone, however, but as with any distance, the right training is needed to ensure that you hit the start line feeling fit and ready to run. In the last two plans, we have been working on the run/walk technique. You will see that this is replaced in the half-marathon training plan with running intervals instead. This means running harder efforts, with slower jogs to recover in-between. We recommend that you can either run the whole of a 10K distance or one-hour solid running, without walking before you start this training plan. This is because you are looking at being on your feet for anywhere from two to three hours for your first half-marathon, and your body needs to be ready to deal with this exertion. We're not saying that you can't choose to do a walk/run system to cover the whole 13 miles, but building your running time will help you to get the stamina you need to complete the challenge.

This plan works on running four times a week, plus a cross-training session, which is another big step up from our 10K plan. You need to be running more to build that fitness and stamina. The half-marathon is a huge challenge and one that should not be taken lightly. It requires dedication, time and effort to complete.

This plan uses four key running sessions each week. The first is an easy run, which is done at

a slow pace and is designed to help you build your weekly mileage, without putting too much strain on your body. This doesn't increase as much in distance each week, and works well as a recovery run following your long run.

The long run is the key part of your training program, as this is the run that will get you through on the day. You don't need to run the whole distance in advance of the race, as you would with the 5K or 10K, but you may like to for your own peace of mind. Therefore, we build up to a final long run of 12-14 miles here.

The other two runs help you with your pacing. The first is a tempo run, which is run at a pace that you find 'comfortably hard'. It should be a challenge, but you are not going flat out. These sessions help your body to learn to cope under pressure – which will help come mile 11 on race day. This pace is faster than your target race pace.

The final session is the interval session, which is alternating bursts of fast running and slow jogging. Usually these are timed or measured intervals, but we have mixed it up here with some fartlek sessions (random bursts of speed throughout a run) and hill sessions (to build endurance). The fast running sections should be hard, and you won't be able to talk while you are running. You wouldn't run a half-marathon anywhere near this pace, but you will feel the benefits.

As you are doing extra running sessions, your cross-training doesn't have to be cardio based. It helps to use the time to work on strength, so consider body weight exercises like squats and lunges, free weights, yoga classes and so on, to challenge your body.

Rest days are incredibly important now, so make sure that you really do relax. Also, the right nutrition comes into play, as you will need to start thinking about on-the-go fuel, such as sports drinks and gels. Once you are running for more than an hour, you should consider these.

Build mileage

Week 1	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	20 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 10 mins tempo run, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 5x (30 secs fast, 1 mins slow), 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	4 miles at easy pace
Week 2	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	20 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 15 mins tempo run, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 5x (45 secs fast, 1 min slow), 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	5 miles at easy pace
Week 3	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	20 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 15 mins tempo run, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 5x (1 min fast, 1 min slow), 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	6 miles at easy pace

with this half-marathon plan

* **Fartlek running** - bursts of fast sprinting for any amount of time, just to raise your heart rate and pace. Set lamppost goals when outside running.

Week 4	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	25 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 20 mins tempo run, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 20 mins fartlek, 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	7 miles at easy pace
Week 5	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	25 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 2x 15 mins tempo run with a 5 mins recovery, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 5x (90 secs fast, 1 min slow), 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	8 miles at easy pace
Week 6	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	25 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 2x 15 mins tempo run with a 5 mins recovery, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 8x (30 secs fast up a hill, easy run down), 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	5 miles at easy pace

Week 7	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	30 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 2x 15 mins tempo run with a 3 mins recovery, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10mins easy run, 5x (2 mins fast, 1 min slow), 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	9 miles at easy pace
Week 8	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	30 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 25 mins tempo run, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 30 mins fartlek, 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	10 miles at easy pace
Week 9	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	30 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 30 mins tempo run, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10mins easy run, 8x (2 mins fast, 1 min slow), 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	11 miles at easy pace

Week 10	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	35 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 2x 20 mins tempo run with a 3 mins recovery, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 20 mins fartlek, 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	12-14 miles at easy pace
Week 11	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	20 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	10 mins easy run, 25 mins tempo run, 10 mins easy run
Thursday	Crosstrain/strength work
Friday	10 mins easy run, 10x (30 secs fast up a hill, easy run down), 10 mins easy run
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	5 miles at easy pace
Week 12	
Monday	Rest day
Tuesday	20 mins easy/recovery run
Wednesday	Rest day
Thursday	40 mins easy run
Friday	15 mins easy run in race kit
Saturday	Rest day
Sunday	Race day



Can I run a marathon?

It is possible for a beginner to build up to marathon distance – if it's done right

It might seem crazy to even consider the challenge of a marathon when you are just starting out, but many people are inspired to start running each year after watching a big city marathon on the television, such as the New York Marathon or the London Marathon.

These events show runners of all abilities completing the course and having fun at the same time, and it makes it seem achievable to anyone. When you first start running, however, you can lose confidence in that fact, as it can be difficult to run for 20 minutes, let alone five hours. Don't be put off though, as it is possible to build up from nothing to marathon, if you give yourself enough time to do it.

Get a marathon place

If you want to set yourself the ultimate challenge, then you might be thinking about signing up for a marathon. However, it can actually be harder to get a place in the marathon of your dreams than it is to run it.

For example, if you wanted to do the London Marathon, then entries to go into the ballot open around a week after the previous event. So, to run in 2015, for example, you would have had to get your name into the ballot in April 2014. The ballot registration process closes when it reaches a certain number of entrants, which in 2014 was around 11 hours from when it opened at midnight. Even if you get into the ballot, then you have to wait until the October to find out if your name is drawn, giving you six months to then get ready for the event.

Other marathons have different processes, and many are first come first served. However, even these tend to sell out up to a year in advance, which means that if you want to do a particular marathon, then you need to plan early. Smaller, local marathons are much easier to get into, but you might not get the same level of support as a big city marathon.

Most marathons have charity places available, which means that you are guaranteed entry into the race in return for a pledge to raise a



certain amount of money. This can be as much as £3,000 for big races like London or New York, but smaller ones, like Brighton Marathon for example, are significantly less.

There are some other routes that you can take. For example, if you are in a running club, then they sometimes get places to give out to its members.

Help! I've signed up

There are plenty of people who get so inspired by watching big marathons that they sign up on the spot having never run before. Or maybe they want to do a big challenge for a charity close to their heart. Either way, if you have already signed up for a marathon and you're new to running, the important thing is not to panic! Break down the time that you have into more manageable chunks. Let's say your marathon is six months away; that's approximately 26 weeks. Normally marathon training plans are 16 weeks long and start from



*Try other races
before the marathon
to gain experience*

roughly being able to run for 45 minutes to an hour, so that gives you around 10 weeks to build up from scratch to that starting point. As long as you build up slowly, then you should avoid injury. The more time you have until your marathon, the more time you can spend on pre-conditioning and getting used to running before launching into a marathon plan.

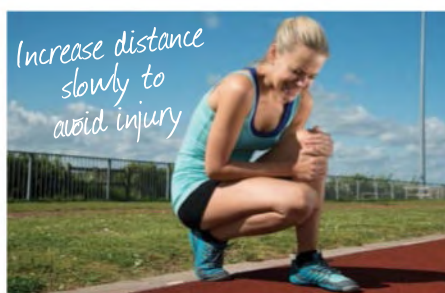
Using run/walk

The run/walk method is a perfectly valid way of completing a marathon and if you choose to do it, you certainly will not be alone. This can mean simply walking when you need to, or it can be more structured. There are plenty of dedicated marathon plans for the run/walk and a popular structure is to run for four minutes and walk for one minute, but you can try any combination you like. You might find that you actually complete the marathon faster than if you tried to run the whole way. Use the walk breaks to take on food and water so that you do

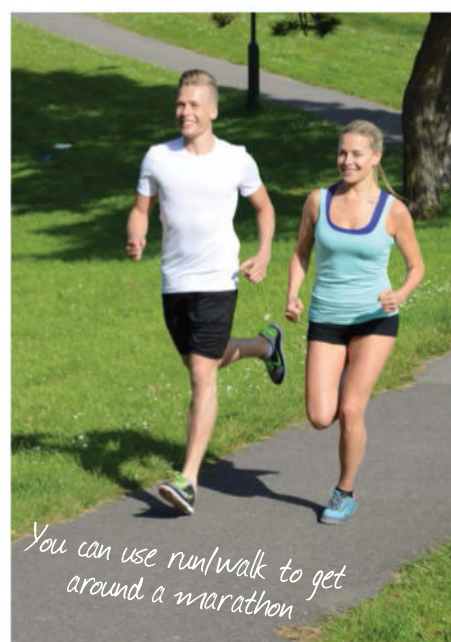
not have to stop running for any reason during the running segments.

Try other races

We suggest that you try and plan in other races in your marathon build up, as it can be overwhelming to have your first race at the marathon, so try and slot in a 5K, a 10K and a half marathon over the course of your training. This will help you to get race experience, as well as gauge your progress.



*Increase distance
slowly to
avoid injury*



*You can use run/walk to get
around a marathon*

Preparing for an obstacle race

Combine running and strength to take on a muddy challenge by getting stuck into one of the popular mud runs or OCR events

Mud runs and Obstacle Course Racing (OCR) are ever growing in popularity and it is an interest in these that can often encourage people to start running for the first time, in order to be able to cope with the demands of these events.

The events themselves can vary wildly. Race for Life (www.raceforlife.cancerresearchuk.org) has introduced its Pretty Muddy series, which are 5K muddy courses with basic obstacles, giving you a chance to try something different for the first time, while raising money for a good cause. These are aimed at all abilities and are good for first timers.

More popular and well-known events include Tough Mudder (www.toughmudder.co.uk), which has over 20 extreme obstacles littered

over the course that require both mental and physical strength; and Rat Race events (www.ratrace.com/events.aspx), which vary from urban obstacle courses to down and dirty mud runs. These races can be anything from a 5k to 40k, so it caters to all levels of experience. With all of this variety, you're bound to find the race fit for you.

How much do I need to run?

This is a common question from those wanting to try their very first OCR event. Often people are more confident in the strength side of things (to conquer the obstacles) and worry that their cardiovascular fitness will let them down. How far you will need to run and how much training you will need to do depends on the event, of course.



If you are looking at, for example, a 5K mud run, you can follow a traditional couch to 5K program to ensure that you can cover the distance, but you will want to include lots of hill training so that you have the leg strength on the day.

Tough Mudder and some of the larger events can cover around 12 miles, so it will take a little longer to train for the running portions. It is worth bearing in mind that it is not running non-stop from point to point like in a traditional road race. You are not expected to cover 12 miles in one go – you are likely to run a couple of miles at most before breaking for an obstacle, which can have queues and bottlenecks – perfect for getting your breath back.

That's the upside, of course. The downside is that those running sections will not be on fresh legs – you will have just tackled an obstacle that is designed to tire your body and test your mind. It can be hard to find the momentum to get moving again after a stop.



How to train

To prepare for an OCR, there are two things you need to think about: coping with the running in between obstacles and the obstacles themselves. If you are completely new to running, you should start by building up to 5K to give yourself a good level of fitness. Once you can manage this, try combining running and strength workouts so that you can get a feel for running when you are tired.

When it comes to training for the obstacles you need to focus on strength work. In particular, upper body strength is important, as many obstacles will involve pulling yourself up and over walls or swinging across monkey bars. Focus on bodyweight exercises, as you will be reliant on your own body on the day. Think push-ups, free weights, barbells, kettlebells, squats, lunges, pull ups... the list goes on. If you prefer working out in group settings, some gyms now offer specific OCR training

classes. For example, Virgin Active and Tough Mudder are launching Mudder Maker classes, which will prepare you for the rigors of a Tough Mudder event. Other classes worth considering are Les Mills BODYPUMP, metafit or circuits.

Be prepared

Make sure that you give yourself enough time to train, especially if you are new to running. Ideally you will want at least 12 weeks to prepare properly. Research your chosen race thoroughly. Find out what kinds of obstacles they have and then you can tailor your training around them, and find out how far the running portions are. One of the advantages of the OCR scene is that time are not important; the aim is just to finish. This means that you are under no pressure and you will work as a team to get around.

What you wear will also be important, so make sure you get the right kit. Even though you will be splattered in mud, you want

lightweight, technical fabrics. Cotton tops will soak up all the water and mud, and get heavy as you go around. Cover arms and legs to protect from bruises and scratches, and consider a headband to keep your hair back.

Trail shoes are usually advised, as they have more grip than road shoes. They will get destroyed, so you don't have to spend a fortune. Have a look at places like SportsDirect (www.sportsdirect.com) where you can find some real bargains. Socks are important too – double layer to prevent blisters and again ones designed for trail are better.

On the day you will need to remember to pack an entire change of clothes for afterwards – underwear and all. You'll need a couple of bin bags for your muddy kit or to keep warm at the start line. Spare shoes, a warm coat or jumper, a towel and some food and drink are also essential.

Most importantly, make sure that you simply enjoy your day!

Staying motivated

When you are training for a race, you need to keep your enthusiasm high

It can be hard to stay motivated when you are on a training plan and this can lead to you missing essential sessions.

This is especially the case when it comes to the cold, winter months. If the weather turns too bad, it can be hard to motivate yourself to head out in the rain, and if snow forces you inside, then the treadmill can drain your will to run pretty fast.

Luckily, we have some tried and tested motivational tricks that will ensure that you keep running all year around, helping you get to that start line in the best shape possible.

Run with a group

Running is an individual pursuit, and while this has a myriad of benefits, you only have yourself to rely on when it comes to motivation. If you can, ask a friend to run with you, as then you have a reason to go out, even when you don't want to. Make sure that you don't pick someone who is likely to flake out on you – you need someone who will help you out of the door on

cold winter mornings. Running with a friend also means that you will be distracted during the run, meaning that you won't notice things like the cold or the rain. If you can't persuade anyone to join you, then consider a running club. There are literally hundreds of these and there will be at least a couple near you. Most of these are aimed at mixed abilities, so you will only be running with other beginners, and the distances and speed will be tailored to suit. By joining a club, not only will you meet new people that you can share your hobby with, you will also be paying to run – and money is a very strong motivator!

Vary your locations

A fast track way to lose your motivation is to always run the same route over and over again. Mix it up by changing where you run. To start with, even reversing your usual route can ease the boredom and can actually be good for you. If you are running the same route in the same direction, then things like road camber can



Run in different places for variety



Training with others will help you to stay motivated and on target

mean that you are putting more stress on one side of your body. Reversing the route keeps your body balanced and your mind guessing. For longer runs in particular, try to visit new locations so that you have the view to keep you going. We tend to learn markers on our usual routes, so that we know how far we have gone, but by trying a new route you will focus on things like how you are feeling as a gauge of the run, rather than when you hit the next lamppost or tree.

Mix up the training

Just as we suggest that you vary your locations, you also need to vary your training patterns. If you usually go for a long, slow plod on a Sunday morning, why not try a little sprint session instead? You can do a bit of fartlek running, picking a landmark anywhere in front of you and running as fast as you can until you get to it, before slowing down again to recover. This will add another dimension to your run. Not only will you burn more calories, but you will stay warmer and can complete your route quicker.

Music can help keep you going when the running gets a little tough

Our running tunes

We reveal the tunes we turn to when we need a little push

Sanne de Boer, editor

1. 30 Seconds to Mars – Up In The Air
2. Birds of Tokyo – Wild At Heart
3. The Black Keys – Howlin' For You
4. Rise Against – Worth Dying For
5. Pendulum – Blood Sugar

Lauren Debono-Elliot, designer

1. The Ian Carey Project – Get Shaky
2. Gordon City – Ready For Your Love
3. DJ Fresh – Gold Dust
4. Avicii – Addicted To You
5. The Killers – Mr Brightside

Listen to music

Many races these days are banning the use of headphones, saying it makes for a safer, more sociable event. However, there is no reason why you can't use music to help you train. The race itself will have plenty of motivational factors to keep you going, with the crowds cheering and other runners to concentrate on, but if you are out on your own, your favourite song can really perk you up if your feeling that lull come over you!

Try creating a playlist that is the right length for your workout, starting with slower songs for your warm up, that then build up to the pace of a steady run, finishing with a fast sprint track to bring you home, or simply hit shuffle and see what comes up! Creating a playlist such as this let's you learn the order of the songs so you know how far through you are without constantly checking on your watch, which can

be very de-motivating. Music can also help pacing – ditch the watch and tell yourself that you will run for one track before you take a walk break. Just hope it's not a 20-minute prog rock spectacular!

Some music devices such as iPods (with Nike + iPod) have a power song function built in to them, which allows you to set your favourite motivational tune, that will come on if your pace slows too much or if you just feel the time is right to pull out the Rocky theme tune, to get up that hill in proper style.



Get ready for your first race

Calm first-race nerves by following these top tips

Entering a race is a great way to test how far you have come, but the thought of running against other people can be a bit intimidating.

Part of the problem is in the name: a 'race' implies that the aim is to beat other people, but for your first race, the only person you are competing against is yourself. It doesn't matter if you come first or last, the key is to finish and to feel good doing it. It can be easy to forget everything that you have learned in training, but we have some top tips to help you get through, and enjoy, your first race experience.

Have a good breakfast

Nerves can make it difficult to eat, but a good breakfast will help you to perform your best. Try a simple meal, like toast or porridge, as this will help to fuel you through the event. Aim to eat

about two hours before the start of the race, and avoid things like fruit, which may upset your stomach during the event.

Wear the right kit

Only wear running kit that you have worn before, as you don't want to chafe or rub during the race. Make sure that you dress for the weather and layer up on colder days. Double up on socks, or wear double-layer socks, as these will prevent blistering. If it is raining or cold, you can wear a bin bag at the start that can be chucked to one side after the gun goes. Some races will collect discarded belongings for charity, so you can wear an old jumper that you don't need any more to stay warm pre-race. Check whether there is a bag drop as well, as you can leave spare clothes for after the race here for a quick change.



Be on time

There is nothing worse than running late on race day, as you won't be able to focus on the event in hand and you will be unlikely to have a chance to prepare properly. Set the alarm early, and get to the event start about an hour before the gun time to ensure that you can get parked, take on water and check your kit is comfortable.

Rope in a friend

The worst part of a race, even for experienced runners, is the waiting on the start line for the gun to fire. This wait can seem to go on forever. This is when the support of others is key to keep your spirits high and the nerves at bay. If you can, get a friend to do it with you, then you can distract yourself from the race ahead. Make sure that you have family and friends at the start to cheer you on too, as this will help you to remember why you are doing the race in the first place.



© LEAF charity

Raising money with friends and family helps with motivation

What's that? Chip: Chip timing is used to accurately gauge how long it takes each runner to finish a race. A mat at the start line will beep as you run over it,



Keep drinking

No matter the distance, or the weather, it is important to take on board plenty of fluid. For a race of less than six miles, there is no need for sports drinks like Lucozade. Just water is fine, but make sure that you sip it slowly over time rather than gulping it down in one go. Find out if there is a water station en route, as this could mean that you don't have to carry a bottle with you. If you are going to be running for 30



minutes or less, then top up on water before you start and you won't need to stop for any more until you finish.

Start at the back

It's tempting to go to the front of a race so that you can have a clear start, but it actually pays to start at the back. In many races these days you will wear a chip that times you from when you cross the start line until you finish, meaning that it doesn't make any difference how far forward you start. Starting at the back means that you will be beginning at a better pace, but also it's good for motivation as you will be passing people from the very start.

Pace yourself

It's easy to go off too quickly at the start of a race and that can lead to early burnout. Wear a watch and know in advance how long it should take you to run each mile or kilometre so that



you can finish in your own time, at a good, steady pace. Then, make sure that you keep to this, speeding up or slowing down as needed. Don't try and keep up with those around you; chances are that you will start to pass many of these people when they begin to tire.

which activates the chip. Another mat at the end deactivates the chip, giving you a race time. No matter how long it takes to cross the start your time is logged.

Being prepared

Make sure that you are race ready!

When it comes to running your first race, preparation really is key. The more you can think about in advance, the smoother the morning of your race will go. The only thing that you want to be worrying about is getting through the race itself.

Preparation starts from as soon as you book your event. When you know where the start location is and the time, begin thinking about how you are going to get there. If you are going to be driving, then check the parking arrangements at the start – they may be a short walk away and can get very busy. If you are using public transport, then check timetables and always go for an earlier bus or train than you need to, to build in time in case things go wrong – trust us, when you don't want a massive traffic jam or a Tube delay, there will be one! Big races may also mean road closures, so be aware of what time you need to be through to the start area. If the event is not local to you, then consider getting somewhere to stay the night before, so that you don't have to spend a long time in the car before the race, as this is a recipe for sore, stiff legs.

Next, you need to wait for your race pack to come through. This is usually about two weeks in advance of the race, but some are earlier and some closer to the event date. Big events, like the London Marathon, require you to collect your race details in person so that you can confirm you are who you say you are, but for a first race this is very unlikely – unless, of course, you are jumping right in at the deep end!

However and whenever you get them through, make sure that you check everything is present and correct. You should have a race number and details such as the route map,

your bag in the annotation. It might seem like a lot, but it is always best to be overpacked. Things like plasters and a towel are there in case of emergency, and you'll be grateful when you limp over the finish line with a massive blister in the pouring rain! Place the kit that you want to wear on the day, including your underwear, socks and trainers, next to your kit bag, along with a bottle of water to remind you to keep drinking. Add your race pack, with your race number filled in on the back in a waterproof marker, showing details of any medical conditions and someone that can be contacted

“Do at least one run in full kit, so that you can check whether anything rubs – you don't want to find that out on the day!”

how many water stations there will be, directions to car parking, where to find first aid and so on. Some races will also be chip timed, meaning that your exact race time will be recorded, so ensure that you have the chip and instructions on how to attach it if needed. You may also have a luggage tag with your race number on, which you can attach to your kit bag if you are planning on leaving it at the bag drop (more on that in a minute). If something is missing, call the organisers straight away, so that there is time to issue you with the bits that you need.

During the final week before the race, there are a few preparation tips you can follow. Make sure that you increase your water intake on a daily basis, sipping it throughout the day. Ensure that your meals are balanced, with plenty of carbs and protein, and don't skip a meal. Do at least one run in full race kit, so that you can check whether anything rubs – you don't want to be finding that out on the day! Finally, get a good night's sleep every night in the last week so that your energy supplies are not depleted.

The night before the race is time to get your kit bag ready. We have provided you with an essential guide to everything that you need in

on the day. Read this through carefully, and if you have one of the listed medical conditions, you will need to place a cross on the front of your race number too, which helps first aid marshals to get you help straight away if you need it. Do this all early in the evening, so that you have time for a relaxing bath, a nice meal and an early night.

In the morning, you should be able to concentrate on fuelling and warming up, rather than whether you have forgotten anything. Get to the race start early so that you can join in with the warm-up if there is one, or do your own warm-up. It also takes away the stress of being late. Many races provide a bag drop, which is somewhere where you can leave your bag while you are running. Your bag is labelled with your race number, so you will need to show your race number to collect it at the end. If the start and finish are in different locations, your bag will be transported from one to the other, so keep an eye out for the last time that you can submit your bag before the race.

Keep drinking water, plan your final toilet stop and then head to the start and enjoy! This is the moment that you have been waiting for and it is time to do yourself proud.



Don't forget your kit bag!

Liquid

An energy drink or bottle of water for a pre- or post-race pick-me-up. You won't know what will be provided on race day so it's best to carry your own supply. Stay hydrated before and after the race.

Food

Keep an emergency banana, cereal bar or gel pack in case you need extra fuel. Some race goodie bags will contain food at the end but it's best to be prepared in advance.

Top tip Use your supporters

If you can, for shorter races give your bag to a friend or family member rather than use the bag drop, as you often have to give your bag in well before the race start, so you won't have everything you will need to hand.



If you need medication or an inhaler then pop this in too

Plasters

In case of pesky blisters, you should always have some plasters to hand.

Towel

Because you can't predict the weather and a soggy ride home won't be fun for you if you're cold and wet.

Safety pins

Take these so you can attach your race number to your T-shirt, they may not be provided at the race venue.

Petroleum jelly

Men, trust us, you are going to want this!

Warm clothes

Keep warm before you start and change when you finish as you will become cold if sweaty and it may be raining!

Top tip

Pack in advance

Always get your kit bag ready the night before so that you don't panic on the morning of the race trying to get everything together. Trust us, you'll have enough to worry about, without having to rummage around for everything you need. Lay out your race kit the night before too.

Pace your race

Keep a steady pace to finish your race feeling strong

Whether you are running a 5K or a marathon, the issue of pacing yourself is just as important. Start too fast and you could find yourself burning out before you even reach the halfway mark, leading to a loss of motivation and a need to slow right down.

It's so easy to do – and we've all done it – because when that gun goes we instinctively push forward with the rest of the crowd, keeping up with those around us. However, that means that you are forcing yourself to run at someone else's pace, not your own. The problem with this is that, while it might feel good at first, you will inevitably slow down over the course of the race and start to struggle.

and time how long it takes you to run it. Then you can use an online pacing calculator to work out your expected finish time for any distance of race. There is a good one here:

<http://www.runnersworld.com/tools/pace-calculator>. We inputted a mile run taking ten minutes, and for three miles, the predicted finish time is 32 minutes and two seconds, which is a pace of around ten minutes 41 seconds a mile. This is a perfectly good time for beginner runners, but don't worry if you come in slower than that, as this is about finding your personal pace.

Once you know what your target race pace is, you need to start practising. As we have already mentioned, a race pace should be comfortably

it is so tempting to speed up, but you don't want to risk burning out. Leave it to the last mile marker for races over five miles, or the last 500m in a smaller race, and then you can try to push your speed – but only if you feel you can. If you do beat your target race time, then you can alter your target race pace for the next race that you enter.

Bigger races, like the London Marathon for example, will have dedicated pacers. If you have ever watched major world race events, you will see pacers running alongside the elite athletes and they are there to ensure that the runner stays on target. Group pacers in big races do the same. They are experienced runners who are employed to run the race at a given pace. They

“You will soon start to feel each pace you run at; you'll be able to know how fast you are running based on how your body feels”

Learning to pace starts in training, and the first thing that you need to do is work out your target race pace. So, if you want to finish a three-mile race, for example, in 30 minutes, then you know that you need to run each mile in ten minutes. In pacing, this is called a 'ten-minute mile', and is a pretty good pace for beginners to aim for in a race.

As you get fitter, your race pace will get faster. However, bear in mind that if you increase your distance, your race pace is likely to slow – so if you decide to next run a six-mile race, you might find your race pace slows to 11-minute miles. Your perfect race pace is the speed at which you can run for the entire duration of the race, without needing to slow down or feel that you could be going a lot faster. It should feel comfortably hard.

When you are first starting out, it can be hard to figure out what your target race pace is. Our suggestion is this: measure an accurate mile (you could do this using a GPS watch or an online route planner, or if you're really lucky, find a race track, which will be accurately measured)

hard, so you don't want to be going out every run and trying to keep to race pace. Instead, the best thing to do is use one run a week to add in race pace intervals. This means running at race pace for a set amount of time, with recovery in between. For a three-mile race, consider running 400m (a quarter of a mile) at your target race pace, then recover for the next 400m and repeat. As you run further and faster over time, you can increase the intervals of your race pace. Do one practise run over the full race distance a month before the race to see how you are progressing.

It sounds complex, but you will soon start to feel each pace you run at; you'll be able to know roughly how fast you are running based on how your body feels, so eventually you won't be tied to your watch!

Before your race, work out your target time per mile, so that you know what time you should be passing each mile marker. Every time you hit a mile, check your watch to see if you need to slow down or speed up to hit your target time. If you are feeling really comfortable,

can usually be identified by a flag or banner denoting what pace they are running at, be it seven-, eight-, nine- or ten-minute miles. Stick with them and they will do the hard work of pacing for you.

In the meantime, running with a friend can help, so that you can help pace and motivate each other.

Top tip

Pace over PB

For your first race, it's not about getting the fastest time possible for the course. It's better to pace yourself perfectly and finish the race feeling good, and knowing that you can still do more.

Whatever time you do it in, you will set a new PB for yourself and it will give you something to aim for in future races.



What's that? PB: This stands for personal best and is the best time that you have run in a given race distance, standing as a great goal to beat in future events.



Garmin Forerunner 10 with HRM
£79.99 / \$129.99



Garmin Forerunner 210 with HRM
£139.99 / \$219.99

Pacing gadgets for beginners

The best toys to help pace your runs

There are plenty of gadgets that can take the strain of pacing off of you. You'll still need to work out what your target pace is, but then you can let a gadget make sure you keep to it. Some devices like the Garmins shown here (www.garmin.com), come with a heart rate monitor to tell you you're training safely.

The best option, but certainly not the cheapest, is to use a GPS watch. These watches can track your exact distance, time and pace as you run. Most can be

programmed to beep if you fall below or go above your target race pace, so you can easily adjust your running.

Systems like the Nike+ (www.nikeplus.com), which have a sensor in your shoe and a receiver on your iPod, for example, will also calculate your pace, so you can keep an eye on your speed at all times. There are various apps available now that use your phone's built-in GPS, if it has it, to keep track of your pace too.

Running for charity

Why not raise money for a good cause while preparing for a race

Running and raising money for charity go hand in hand. Whether you're looking at running a 5K or a marathon, you can guarantee that you will see charity vests in the running crowd around you.

The Race For Life series, for example, is one of the best-known events in the United Kingdom, raising huge amounts of money for Cancer Research UK through its women-only runs. But it doesn't stop there; local races often support local charities, themed races encourage fancy dress to get the cash rolling in and, whatever your location, there will always be an event worth taking part in.

Even if you don't enter a race that has been specifically organised on behalf of a charity, you can choose to raise money in return for your efforts just by letting the charity know your plans. They will supply you with a fundraising kit and they will always be grateful for however much you can raise.

Big events, like the London Marathon and the Great South Run, for example, have running places set aside for charities. For these, you must apply to a charity and register with them to get a place, as well as pledge to raise a set amount of sponsorship. These places are great if you don't get in on the ballot and still want to get involved. Even if you do get your own race place, you can run as part of the charity team, which means you'll get a running vest to show

off the charity that you are running in aid of. The London Marathon is the biggest fundraising event on the planet, having raised over £500 million for good causes since the race began in 1981.

Fundraising not only helps those in need, but it will help you to stay motivated when training, as you won't want to let down the people that you have promised to help. It also helps to take the pressure off of chasing a time, as it is the finishing that matters. It's best to pick a charity that you feel passionate about, as this will help to encourage you even more.

Make sure that you set aside enough time for fundraising, as you don't want to be leaving it to the last minute – you won't need the extra stress come race day. First, set up a website that can collect donations. Sites like www.justgiving.com and www.virginmoneygiving.com, enable you to set up a simple page with details about your event on it, set a fundraising

target, accept payments and pass the money on to the charity. This cuts down on admin work for you, and saves you chasing for sponsorship after the race. Send the website out to everyone on your email list and social networks, and remind people every couple of weeks. Update your page too, giving people an insight into your training – this helps people to engage with your challenge and makes them more likely to contribute.

Next, get a traditional sponsorship form and collection box. Use these to take into work, school or the gym – anywhere where there are a lot of people who might want to help a good cause. Make sure that they fill out their full addresses, so that the charity can collect Gift Aid (from tax-paying citizens only), increasing their funds. If you really want to pull in the cash, however, then you need to start to think about hosting an event. Things like pub quizzes, raffles, cake sales and the like encourage



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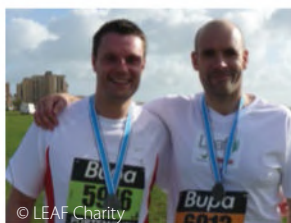


Running for charity can be great for motivation

What's that? Gift Aid: This is a tax incentive in the UK, designed to allow you to give tax-effective funds to charities, who can reclaim the tax on your donation.



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people to part with their money, as they are getting something in return. It also means that people who have already sponsored you the traditional way might want to contribute more to attend an event. Make sure that you publicise

form a team and wear matching outfits to make you stand out on the day. And don't forget about your workplace either; many companies will offer to match what you raise, or give you a contribution towards your target. If you are

“The key to fundraising is to not be afraid to ask. The smallest donations can make a huge difference”

your event as much as possible, get friends to spread the word and ask the venue to put up posters and a collection jar near the entrance. Your chosen charity may be able to help out with stickers, banners and balloons as well, so ask them what they can do to help with your fundraising – it's in their best interests to do so, as in the long run you will raise more money. If you are running with friends, then you could

running as a team of colleagues, then you are likely to get an even better payout.

The key to fundraising is to not be afraid to ask. The smallest of donations can make a huge difference, so encourage people to give anything that they can. Every time someone donates, make sure that you say thank you personally, as these are the people that will help carry you through your big event.



The amount you give stays the same, but the amount they receive is increased.

Fundraising ideas

1. Set up a website

This has to be the quickest and easiest way to get money towards your target. People are sent a link and they can donate whatever they like using their debit card and leave you a note at the same time. You can personalise your page with photos and details, as well as set up an automated thank you email for donations.

2. Host a quiz night

This is a relatively easy event to set up. Ask your local pub if you can borrow the mic for a night and ask anyone that wants to play to pay a small fee. You can also pass around a collection pot for further donations. You could alternatively hijack a current pub quiz event and ask the organisers to give the proceeds to your charity for one night.

3. Have a raffle

Everyone loves a chance to win. Ask around your work, friends and family to collect prizes for a raffle and then sell tickets. You'll be surprised how many companies are generous with prizes when it comes to charity!



4. Do some baking

Cakes and biscuits are relatively inexpensive to make, but watch the money come rolling in when you host a cake sale. If you can hold it in a workplace, then send an email around about the sale at peak snacking time – usually 11am or 4pm – and watch the queues form.



5. Time it right

If you pass around a sponsorship form, payday is definitely the time to do it! People are likely to be generous with the amount. Also, collect the money after payday so that you're more likely to get the money promptly.



Different kinds of races

Find running a standard road race a little monotonous? Why not try one of these other running-related events

As running has grown in popularity, so has the number of events that incorporate it. There are loads of different sporting races out there that cater for people of all abilities, so now that you can run, there's nothing stopping you from trying something a little bit different too.

Here we run down the best multi-activity events and types of runs with a difference, so that you can be encouraged to try something a little bit unusual with your running and have even more fun while getting fit.

Trail running

Trail running is a sport unto itself, and it is increasing in popularity year on year. Distances are similar to standard road races, but the difficulty can vary massively. A beginner's trail race might use forest paths or country parks, where the surface is fairly even, on well-marked paths and a set route to follow. You probably won't even need trail shoes for many of these. At the other end of the scale, there are trail and cross-country runs where you have to master technical downhills, self-navigate between waypoints and push up incredible hills. You will need a new set of kit for these races, especially trail shoes, which give you more stability on uneven terrain. See www.tra-uk.org for a trail race directory.

Extreme trail running

If you get addicted to off-road running, then you might want to try one of the more extreme races available. Many of these have great names like Hellrunner (www.hellrunner.co.uk), which kind of sums up what they are about. They involve all kinds of obstacles, water crossings and lots and lots of mud. These are best done with friends, as you will need the company and encouragement when you are trying to wade through freezing cold, muddy water that's up to your armpits (we're not even joking!). These events aren't about speed, but they're just for fun.

Duathlon and triathlon

These are the most common types of multi-activity events involving either run-cycle-run (duathlon), or swim-cycle-run (triathlon). These are great for your all-around fitness, but it does mean training in three disciplines rather than just the one. The best thing about triathlons is that you can already do the running part. If you opt for a Super Sprint distance, then that usually involves a 400m swim, 10K cycle and a 2.5K run – with your strongest event last, and only over a short distance, you can cross the finish line feeling strong! If you don't fancy the swim, and that is usually the bit that puts people off, try the duathlon, or look for triathlons that make the most of a local swimming pool rather than open water.

Adventure racing

Similar to a triathlon, adventure races have lots of different disciplines in one race. However, these can be pretty varied. Cycling and running are usually par for the course, but you could be asked to kayak, orienteer or climb as well. Often the organisers will throw in a few surprises along the way too, especially at an amateur level, such as obstacle courses. These events are usually done in teams of three and you all have to finish together, meaning that teamwork is just as important as individual effort.

Fancy dress races

Just like a typical road race, except that you are required to dress up as a superhero, a gorilla or Santa! These events are becoming more common now. They usually cost a bit more to enter than a usual race, but they are almost always for really good charities, so not only will you get a good workout, you'll be helping others while you are at it.

Try duathlon or triathlon events

Trail running in the winter months



Activity races could have you taking to the water!

**"You get a good workout
– think how many extra
calories you will burn off
in a massive costume!"**

Top 5 UK events

1. Tough Mudder

www.toughmudder.co.uk/

Described as 'Probably the toughest event on the planet', Tough Mudder is not for the faint-hearted. It's 12 miles of hardcore obstacles, designed to push you to your limits. Over a million people have done an event worldwide, so it must be good fun too! Events do sell out, so if you are interested you need to get in quick!

2. Mo Running

www.mo-running.com

This series of events takes place in November (for Movember) and participants are encouraged to register at www.movember.com to help fundraise. There are 10K and 5K events available across the country and the only requisite is that you have some form of moustache while you run. There are prizes for best dressed and best moustache, so it's worth making the effort.

3. The Color Run

www.thecolorrun.co.uk

This is a 5K, un-timed race that celebrates 'healthiness, happiness and individuality'. It has now come to the UK and there are various locations. The main draw about the race is that you start off wearing white, but at the end you are covered from head to toe in multicoloured powder!

4. Zombie 5K

www.zombieevacuation.com/

Essentially this is a 5K trail race, but the difference is that as you run and navigate obstacles, you are chased by zombies... Yes, you read that right. You can register as an 'Evacuee' (to run the race) or a 'Zombie' (which is a volunteer role).

5. CaniX UK

www.cani-cross.co.uk

This is a series of running events for people who want to run with their dogs. Held in lots of different park locations, they are cross-country events and there are no restrictions on fitness level or breed.

Urban running

A relatively new addition to the race calendar, these are designed to make the most out of cities and they have some interesting obstacles along the way. For example, the Urbanathlon (www.urbanathlon.co.uk), which varies in distance from 5K to 10K, offers a variety of 12 different obstacles, which can include scrambling, climbing, wading and much more. The Men's Health: Survival of the Fittest challenge (<http://mhsurvival.co.uk>) is ten obstacles over 10K,

which include scramble nets and bales of hay to get up and over. You'll forget about the running part in-between because you'll just be too busy laughing! Of course, not all urban events are about adventurous obstacles. Tower running is especially for a particularly crazy kind of runner, as it involves running up stairs... lots of them! A list of events can be found here, www.towerrunning.com/english/races.htm, but it's not for the faint-hearted!

Work as a team

These kinds of races are definitely ones that you will want to drag friends and family along too. You'll need a helping hand (literally on some of the adventure obstacles!) to get through the event, and by making it a team event, you are taking the pressure off worrying about setting a good time. These events usually have teams of three, but you can enter multiple teams from one organisation, so consider trying to get something started at work.

These events can be great for fundraising too, as having more hands on deck will mean that you can get even more money together for good causes.

*You can find
fun routes in any
city or town*

*Why not try a themed
fancy dress race for fun?*



*Work as part of
a team in events*

Essential gear



118

See how your phone can track your progress

Overpronation

Neutral

Underpronation

127 What kind of runner are you?

Essential gear

We pick out the best products for your running kit, and take an in-depth look at all the different running gadgets

118 Running gadgets
Which ones do you need?

122 Smartwatches and fitness bands
Get the lowdown of this latest hype

124 Running apps
Track distances, pace and more

126 Get the right trainers for you
The importance of trainers

128 Men's trainers
The best shoes for your feet

130 Women's trainers
Options whatever your budget

132 Tops
Tees, tanks and long sleeves

134 Bottoms
Running tights and shorts

136 Jackets
Keep warm in winter

138 Accessories
Essential extras for your run

140 GPS watches
Monitor your pace and distance

142 Where to buy
UK and international stockists

128
Top trainers for male runners

130
The best trainers for women



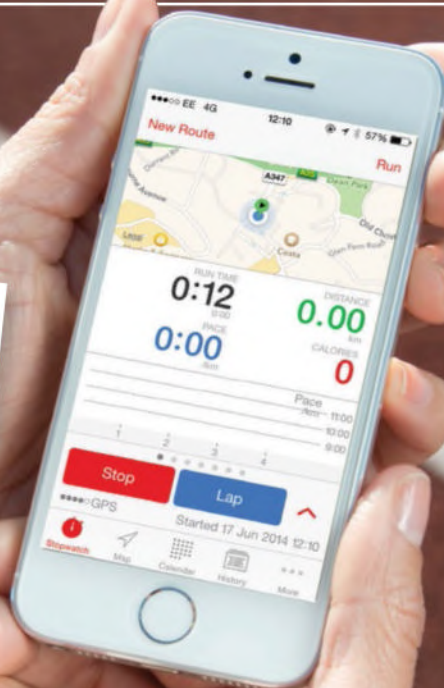


132 What makes the perfect top?

Try out different brands and styles to find kit that's nice and comfy



136 Pick the right jacket to keep you dry



134

Choose the best bottoms for you



140

Find your way with a GPS watch



138

Ideal accessories for every type of runner

Running gadgets: What do you really need?

There are some great modern-day extras to help your running.
We look at the main ones available

There are gadgets for everything these days and running is no exception. There are gadgets to help you pace your runs, gizmos to let you listen to music on the go, and apps to track your progress to tell you how many calories you burnt and how far you pushed your body.

Here we round up the main types of gadgets that you may come across in the sports arena, so you know which ones are worth it for you, and which you really don't need to splash your

cash on. You certainly don't need gadgets to help your running, but sometimes they can make the experience that little more enjoyable, and motivate you on those colder rainy days.

Music players and accessories

The most popular of all sports accessories is the portable MP3 player. You can't go anywhere without seeing someone with headphones on, and running is a sport that music complements perfectly. If you are running alone, then listening to music can help you with your motivation, as well as keeping you company. There are plenty of digital music players out there, but when you

are looking for one for sports, there are a few things to bear in mind. First, you want to keep the weight and size down as much as possible. Look for small ones with no moving parts, so that your sound quality won't be affected by the constant up and down motions of running. Think about how you are going to carry them too. Many sports models will have clips so that they can be easily attached to your clothing anywhere that's comfortable, which is perfect. However, you can fit the smallest varieties into belts, armbands and pockets, so make sure that the wires on the headphones it comes with are long enough. You should try to get a water-resistant model too, as you want it to



Sony Walkman NWZ-W273

Price: £59 / \$99.99

Website: www.sony.com



Jabra Sport Wireless+ (with built-in FM radio)

Price: £79.99 / \$99 Website: www.jabra.com



Apple iPod Nano Price: £129 / \$149

Website: www.apple.com



SanDisk Sansa Clip Zip
Price: From £46.99 / \$59.99
Website: www.sandisk.com

keep going if you get caught in a sudden rain storm, or it may get a little sweaty. Check out the working temperatures as well. Some models will freeze up in cold conditions, so you may need to store these inside your clothing, or in a more protective glove close to your body to keep them warm, which isn't always practical. Most importantly, price is a big factor. Music devices have come down in price over the past few years, so search online for the best bargain before buying the first one you find.

When you have found the perfect player, you need headphones. If you have got a proper sports music player, then the headphones that come with it will probably be perfect. However, if you are using an everyday player, you may want to purchase separate headphones specifically designed for sports use, which are the most comfortable and will stay in place. You can get options that wrap around your head, which can be more comfortable for running, or you can get in-ear models with a specially designed ear bud to stay in place. Ideally, you want ones that let you still hear the sounds around you, like traffic, or other pedestrians. This is important for staying safe and being aware of your surroundings.

When it comes to actually listening to music, there is nothing wrong with a good shuffle, but you can use your music to help your performance, so a large readable screen can be beneficial. There are various albums out now that are designed for running, and these will have the right beats per minute (BPM) to take you from a jog to a run to a sprint if you stay in time with the music, a great challenge for quiet, lonely runs. You can make your own playlist by



yurbuds Inspire 100
Price: £16.99 / \$N/A
Website: www.yurbuds.com/

sorting your tunes by BPM and choosing ones with a lower BPM for your warm-up and cool-down, and faster ones for your main running session. If you don't want to be checking your watch to see how long you have been out, make the playlist the length of your session and run until the music stops.

One thing to bear in mind, however, is that many races now ban the wearing of headphones. So make sure that you do some training runs sans music to prepare.

Watches

Another essential extra is a sports watch. You don't even need to spend a lot on a decent watch to get the benefits as a beginner. All you need, at a very basic level, is a digital watch that you can see clearly when you are running, so that you can keep an eye on time. The watch itself needs to be made of a durable rubber, so that it is unaffected by sweat and won't rub your skin. Look for one that is shock resistant too, so it will be happy when you're pounding the pavement. Water resistance and a screen light are good extra features.

If you want to go to the next level, you can look for a watch with a stopwatch feature. This means that you can easily see how long you have been running for. This is good for out-and-back routes, so that you can time how long it takes you to get to the halfway point, before you turn and try to beat your time on the way back. It is also a good way to see if you have improved your regular route times – another motivational advantage to wearing a sports watch. Sports watches might also have a Lap or Split function. You hit this to make a marker on



Timex IRONMAN Sleek 50-lap
Price: £69.99 / \$69.95
Website: www.timex.com

your watch of your time at a set point, to which you can refer afterwards.

For example, you could hit the Lap button at every mile marker, so that when you get back you can see how long each individual mile took. This is useful to see if you are starting out too fast and it's affecting your performance in the later stages of your run. You could also take a reading every five minutes, for example, so you can see at what time into your run you peak and when you start to tire out.

Another handy feature to look for is a night-light, which usually turns on a backlight behind your display so that you can see the display in the dark. Even watches with all of these features don't cost the earth and you will get the use out of it every single time you run. They are designed to last, too, so other than replacing a battery, it will be a good investment.

GPS and pacing systems

If you want to go one step further, then you are entering the territory of the GPS watch. These don't come cheap, with basic models starting from around £60. As well as performing the same tasks as a regular sports watch, these devices have a GPS functionality built in, meaning that they communicate with satellites around the Earth to locate your exact position, if you're in a fairly open environment. They can then monitor you as you run to give you a precise distance for how far you've gone. Well, precise enough anyway, as GPS devices are not completely accurate. If you lose signal, for example when you run underneath trees, then the connection is broken momentarily and there could be a delay getting the GPS data

Essential gear



Garmin Forerunner 15
Price: £119.99 / \$139.99
Website: www.garmin.com



Polar M400
Price: £124.50 / \$199.95
Website: www.polar.com



**Epson RunSense SF-810V
(GPS and Heart Rate Monitor)**
Price: £299.99 / \$N/A
Website: www.epson.co.uk

back up to date. Still, they are simple and the basic watches are just a case of hitting the start button and beginning your run, then viewing the end results on screen at the end.

Basic GPS watches will record your distance and time, plus pace and calories burnt over the course of the session. Data from GPS watches can then be downloaded to your computer afterwards so that you can build up a log of your progress. These are usually compiled by the watch manufacturer's own software package. Most are hosted online, so that you can log on from anywhere to see what your last run was and how you did. You can also set goals, like running a certain amount of times in a week, or completing so many runs at under a set pace. It's a great way to motivate yourself to keep pushing to new goals.

GPS watches don't stop there though, as you can get models that cost up to several hundred pounds. These add in a bunch of handy features. For example, some will enable you to download full training plans into the watch to meet a distance target and the watch will ensure that you meet each day's requirements. As the watch can monitor pace, it can also help you to do interval training by telling you what pace to run at and for how long.

You can usually set 'pacing bands' on these watches too. If you are aiming for a particular pace, say 9 min/mile, then you can set up a band of 8:45 min/mile to 9:15 min/mile. The watch will then beep if you go outside of this band in either direction, letting you know if you need to speed up or slow down to keep to your target pace.

More fun features on these watches include a virtual training partner and a pixel person that you have to stay ahead of during the course of the race to meet your goals. This can be great if you respond well to competition.

You don't have to have an expensive GPS watch to get accurate distance data, as there are other options available. These usually use a footpod, which is a sensor that figures out your distance based on your average stride length in a similar way to what a pedometer does. This sensor feeds back information to a receiver, which is usually in the form of a watch; however, the popular Nike+ system can also feed into an iPod. You might find that a standard running watch can be bought with a footpod, so check the manufacturer's website. These aren't as accurate as using GPS systems, but they are a cheap alternative and they do give a rough idea

of the distance travelled and time taken. This is a good place to start if you don't want to spend a lot of money in one go.

Heart rate monitors

Many GPS watches will include the option to add on a heart rate monitor, or you can buy a separate heart rate monitor system. These are designed to monitor your heart rate during exercise. A heart rate monitor (HRM) usually comes in two parts. The first is a strap that goes around your chest and monitors your heart rate. This transmits the data to a receiver, which is in the form of a watch. The watch translates the data and presents you with your current beats-per-minute (BPM), updated in real-time. There are some wrist-based HRMs coming on the market now, which mean you don't have to wear a chest strap, for example the Epson RunSense SF-810 (pictured left).

It takes a little bit of maths before you start to use a HRM to figure out what sort of numbers you want to see (see boxout, right, for more information). But when you know what your target heart rate is, you'll know that you are working in your optimum fitness zone. You can then figure out what your BPM should be if you are running at a steady pace, or pushing your fitness in a sprint session. You can also see how quickly you recover from exertion, which is good for interval sessions as you can ensure that your heart rate has come right back down before you start sprinting again.

Basic models are cheap and they record the essential information. This includes being able to set your own heart rate limits, or zones, that you want to work within, and it will record time and calories too. As you spend more money, you get more features. For example, as with normal sports watches, you can start to add lap or split times, so you can see an average BPM for each individual section of your run. You may also get a timer function for interval work, so that it tells you how long you need to work at a higher heart rate before you can rest. Not all models will enable you to connect to a computer, but those that do will let you analyse your heart rate readings in much more detail.

You may need to try a few HRMs to find the right one for you. In particular, the strap part needs to fit well and be comfortable. If it moves around too much when you are running, then this will affect the accuracy of the readings being transmitted to your watch, as well as leading to painful chafing.

Using your heart rate monitor

How to work out your optimum heart rate zones

It's no good having a heart rate monitor (HRM) if you don't know how to use it! At a basic level, the HRM can be used to keep an eye on your BPM over the course of a training session. Though you can expect it to rise over the course of the session, you can ensure that it doesn't jump rapidly upwards or downwards. To get the most from it, however, you need to know your target heart rate.

This is usually calculated as a percentage of your maximum heart rate, so that's the first thing that you need to work out. The general formula for this is 220 minus your age – this is the maths used when you see heart rate tables on machines in the gym, for example. These charts will show your maximum heart rate for your age and the zones for weight loss and cardiovascular fitness, worked out

as a percentage of your maximum heart rate. You can then make sure that you stay within the right band for your goals. This general formula is in dispute and there are others out there, but it is a good starting point. The more accurate way, however, is to wear your HRM and hit the treadmill. Make sure that you are completely warmed up and then run as fast as you can for three minutes (you need to be able to keep this up for the whole time, so go as fast as you can manage to complete the time). Rest for a couple of minutes by bringing your speed down to a slow jog, and then repeat the run. The figure that you are looking for is the highest rate that your HRM records during the second run. Now that you have a maximum heart rate, you can set up training 'zones' to work within.

Fat burning – 50-60% of max

This is what you want to aim for on your long, steady runs to ensure you are working on weight loss goals.

Aerobic – 60-70% of max

This is perfect for your faster runs, but it is a speed at which you can keep going for the whole session. This will help to boost your cardiovascular system.

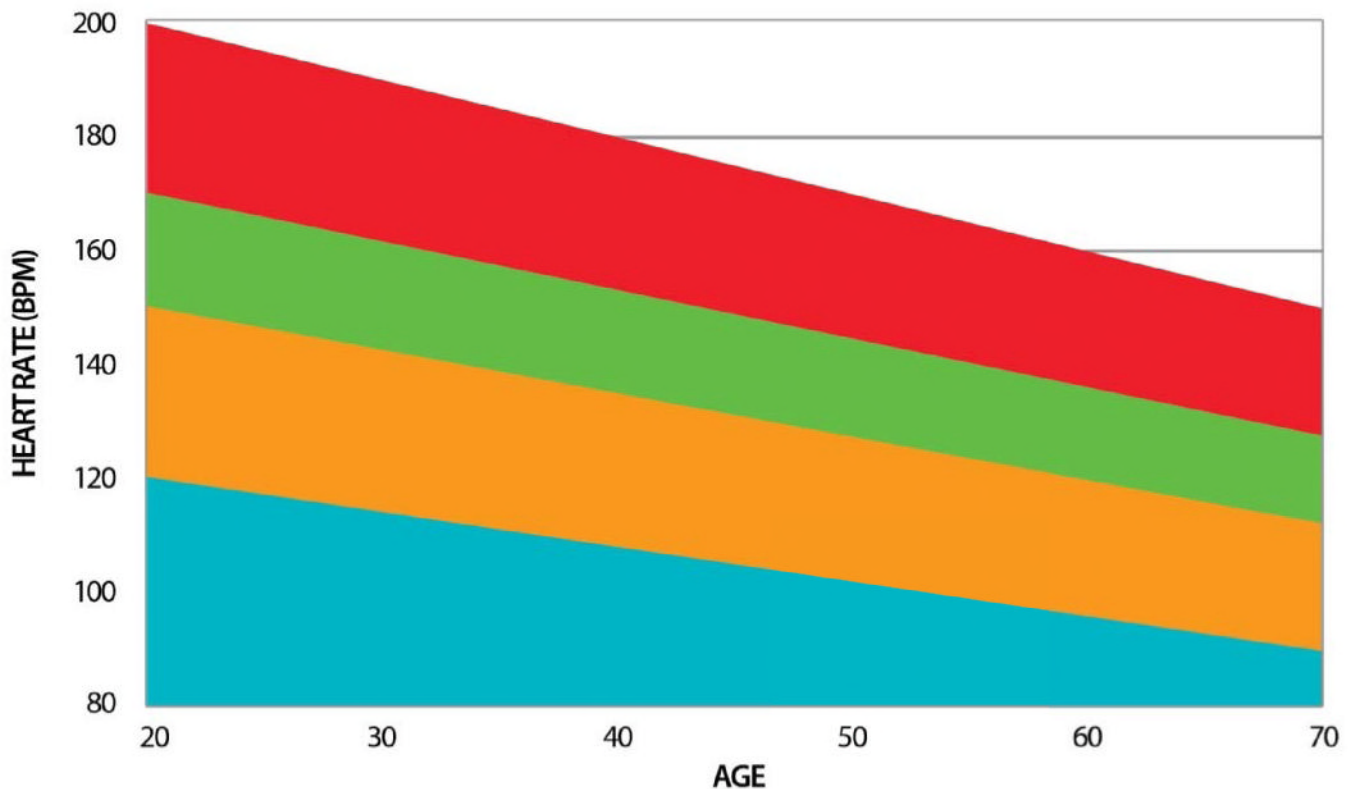
Steady state – 70-80% of max

This is perfect for running at threshold, so that you are 'comfortably hard'. This is good for pacing runs too.

Anaerobic – 80-90% of max

This is for sprints in short intervals only. This is when your body gets used to working with a lack of oxygen and to handle lactic acid build-up.

General heart rate zones



Smartwatches and fitness bands

They're the latest technology to keep you healthy, but can they help with your running?

Every month, new gadgets for our wrists are released, all promising to keep us fit and healthy by tracking and monitoring our every move, and helping us to record our workouts. The question is, which of these are worth it for new runners, and are any of them a good alternative to a dedicated running watch?

Let's be honest; none of these wearables are essential to you becoming a runner. You can just go out and run, maybe keep a log of progress in a notepad. But if you're interested in getting a better view of your daily activity, then you have two key choices: a fitness band or a smartwatch.

Fitness bands

Fitness bands and monitors have been around for a while now. The first incarnations clipped on to your clothing to monitor your activity, but the trend seems to be towards wrist wearables at the moment. These vary in complexity, depending on what it is you want to monitor.

FitBit (www.fitbit.com) is a well-known name in the industry. Its basic Flex is a simple rubber band that syncs with your phone via an app and tells you how many steps you have taken, your calories burned, your minutes of activity (running, walking fast, etc) and miles covered. It also monitors your sleep patterns. There is a

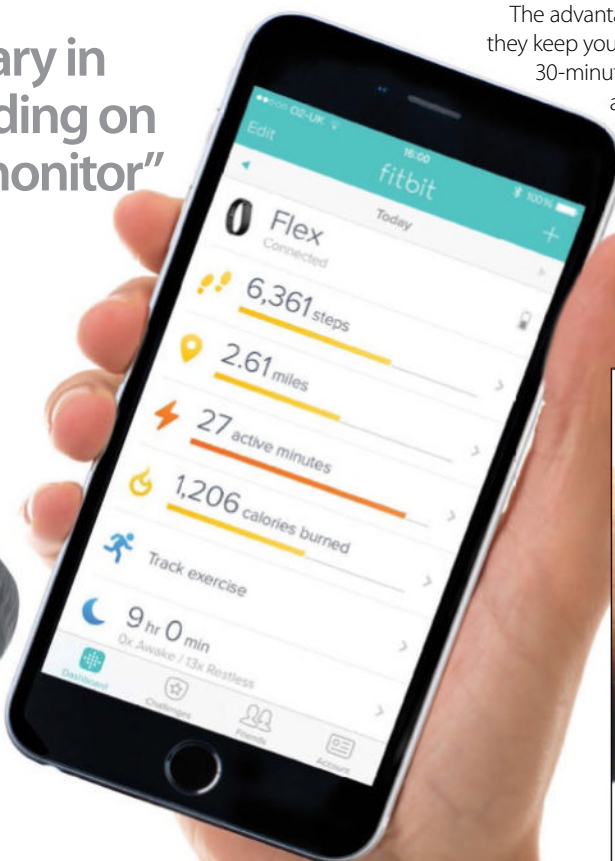
basic screen with lights that glow, one for each 20% of your daily goal met. Moving through the range you can get the Charge, which has a better display showing the time and numeric step count; the Charge HR, which offers wrist-based heart-rate monitoring; and the Surge, which steps into smartwatch territory.

Jawbone (www.jawbone.com) offers a similar activity band range with differing levels of advancement in tracking and they are well known for being aesthetically pleasing, which is good if you're wearing it 24/7. The Misfit Shine (www.misfit.com) is a fashionable option, too, as it can be worn anywhere and looks discreet.

The advantage of these fitness bands is that they keep you moving all day, rather than just a 30-minute run. If you work in an office, it's

a good incentive to get up for a drink or to meet a colleague in person. You can set your own personal goals and this will improve your overall health for running.

"Fitness bands vary in complexity, depending on what you want to monitor"





Smartwatches

If, however, you want a real Jack-of-all-trades, there is the new breed of smartwatch, in particular the Android Wear range and the Apple Watch. These watches have apps and can be used for all manner of activities, such as answering calls, replying to messages, taking notes, sorting emails, etc.

For runners, there are plenty of apps that have been brought over to both platforms, including Nike+, Runkeeper and Strava. The apps provide an on-watch view of your run.

The Apple Watch and Android Wear also have general fitness and health monitoring apps, which can replace the job of a fitness band. These apps track how many steps you take in a day so that you can build up an overall picture of your health.

The Apple Watch has its own Activity and Workout apps. The Activity app has three simple coloured rings, which show you how often you have moved (calories burned), exercised (brisk activity) or stood (a break from staying still). The Workout app has lots of built-in activities, such as running or indoor cardio, which you can select and record your workout.

Pros and cons for running

As great as running is for us, it's not good to be still all day, save a short run. It's better to move more often, and keeping track of that can be a great incentive.

Also, these devices have more than one function – they record everything and not just our runs, which might make them easier to justify over a dedicated running watch.

However, it really comes down to what you are looking for. If you want to accurately record and log every run, then this might not be the right avenue. The biggest problem with smartwatches and fitness bands is that they rely on having your phone on you to sync with. The Apple Watch and the majority of Android Wear watches don't have their own GPS, so they use the data from your phone to determine your running stats. Essentially, it's no different to using a running app on your phone.

This means that you can't leave the phone at home while running (which you might not want to do anyway, in case of emergencies) and the phone has to be running an app, which could drain the power, especially if you are listening to music too. Also, the GPS on your phone is less accurate than that on a GPS running watch, so there will be a margin of error. This is often why people purchase a GPS running watch in the first place.

If accuracy is important, but you want to measure daily activity, then consider one of the cheaper fitness bands like a FitBit Flex and use alongside a GPS watch. Another good option is the Garmin Forerunner 15 (www.garmin.com), which is a running watch with a built-in step counter that you can wear all day.

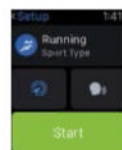
Top 5 apps



1. RunKeeper

Available on: Android Wear, Apple Watch
Price: Free

RunKeeper tracks your runs, including pace, distance, calories, and provides built-in training plans. You can control it via your smartwatch to view essential stats.



2. Runtastic

Available on: Android Wear, Apple Watch
Price: Free

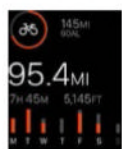
The Lite Runtastic app is free, but you can go to PRO for £3.99 (Apple) or £4.99 (Android) for more features, such as live tracking if you want family to know where you are.



3. Google Fit

Available on: Android Wear
Price: Free

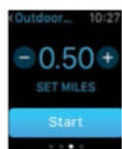
A basic activity tracker that shows you your steps in a day and time spent running on an easy-to-view interface. You can connect other apps to it, so you can see all your fitness data in one place.



4. Strava

Available on: Android Wear, Apple Watch
Price: Free

One of the best-known running and cycling apps is available on smartwatches, with an intuitive display to track activity in real time, and view past activities in one screen.



5. Activity and Workout

Available on: Apple Watch
Price: Free

These two built-in apps on Apple Watch monitor your overall health and fitness. Activity monitors daily movement to ensure you're on your feet enough; Workout lets you record exercise (e.g. runs!).

Running apps

If you have a smartphone, then you can track your runs, distance, pace and more with these apps

While having a GPS watch is nice, they can be quite pricey. Luckily, if you have a smartphone, then you can already do everything that a watch can do by downloading a GPS-enabled running app.

Most of them are free, but watch out: a lot of them ask you to upgrade to a Premium version to unlock some of the features, and others ask for a monthly subscription fee to get everything they offer. Do some research about what features you actually need and that will help you to find the app that's right for you.

Basic tracking

The most basic function of a running app is to track and record your runs. These work in the same way as GPS watches, tapping into your phone's GPS to find your location and monitor you while out and about. They will be able to monitor your distance, pace and time, and visually feed these back to you on the screen in real-time. You can also have audio updates of your current pace and distance at set intervals.

All of these apps will use your phone's own GPS system, so in terms of speed to locate a satellite and get running, every app is on a level

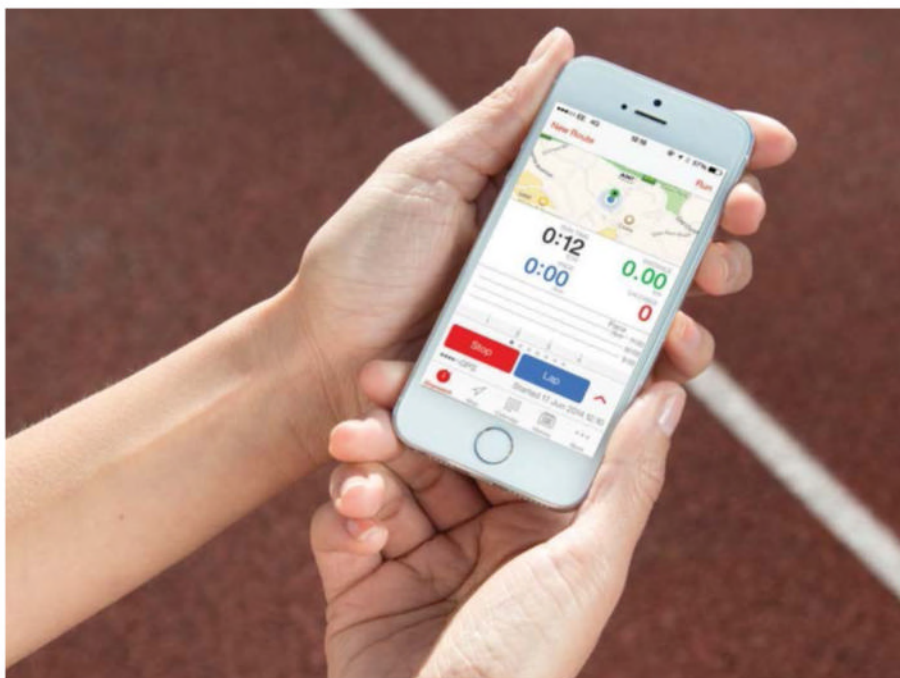
footing. What makes the difference is ease of use and the range of features that are offered.

You need to think about whether you want to just have the app, or whether you want it to sync your details with a website so that you can view data on a bigger screen. Apps like Map My Run (www.mapmyrun.com/app/) are heavily linked to their website, so you can share data across the platform. If you already use a mapping service, then it is worth seeing if it already has an app attached as you can import the runs you have already logged.

More advanced apps will give you things like mile splits (so you can see how you ran each mile); elevation data (to track how hilly your runs are) and detailed pace information. Runmeter (<http://abvio.com/runmeter/>) is an iPhone-only app but it is incredibly detailed and customisable. This is a good option if you're into stats!

“The most basic function of a running app is to track and record your runs”





Community spirit

A lot of apps will connect with social media networks as well, which can be a good motivational tool. You can set your app up to post on Facebook and Twitter when you have finished a run (or even when starting one). There's nothing better to make you run faster than knowing that the whole world will see how well you've done when you finish.

Many of the apps have their own communities too, so if you know other people using the same app, you can become friends with them and compete in challenges together. Again, this is great for motivation, as you can see if a friend has completed their run and that's likely to make you want to finish yours.

Services like Nike+ (nikeplus.nike.com/plus/) have great communities, and there are even virtual races, where you can run a set distance at a set time with thousands of other people.

Shake up your training

If you want more from your app than simply tracking your runs, there are apps that help you start running or improve your running. NHS offers a Couch to 5K program that gets you running for 30 minutes non-stop in 9 weeks.

The Bupa Smart Runner app (www.bupa.co.uk/smartrunner-app) gives you a series of different types of runs to tackle, include sprints

and hills, and guides you through the session. The app also has strength and conditioning programs to make you a stronger runner, and therefore less prone to injury.

Some apps will also offer training programs for certain distances. These build up over a course of so many weeks to get you to your goal. Most of these programs are set in stone, but some of the more advanced apps will let you add your own training programs, or customise the ones that are already on there. It helps to have a plan when training for a particular race, and this can keep you on track.

Weight loss apps

If you are running as part of a weight-loss program, then consider apps that track your daily calorie intake and output, rather than just a running app. These apps enable you to list all the food you eat in a day, and your calories are added up using a built-in database. You aim to eat a set number of calories, as defined by your weight-loss goals, but you can do exercise to burn additional calories, and this is logged too. One of the most popular is MyFitnessPal (www.myfitnesspal.com/), which has a huge database of foods to choose from. It also links to other fitness apps, such as Endomondo (www.endomondo.com), so you can track your runs and have the calorie data imported into your MyFitnessPal app.

Top 5 apps



1. Couch to 5K

Available on: iOS/Android

Price: Free

There are a lot of apps that offer 0-5K programs, but this NHS one leads you through the process of getting running in a clear and concise manner, talking you through each and every run.

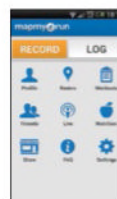


2. Nike+ Running

Available on: iOS/Android

Price: Free

Great if you need motivation when you run. It can post on social media when you start a run, and friends can Like your run to send you a 'cheer' during your session.

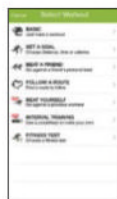


3. Map My Run

Available on: iOS/Android

Price: Free

The Map My Run website is a great site for planning and measuring routes, and the app is an extension of that. You can track your routes and save them, and they will then appear on your online account.

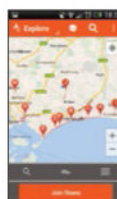


4. Endomondo Sports Tracker

Available on: iOS/Android

Price: Free

This is a great-looking app that tracks running, cycling, walking and more and syncs with an online community. The premium version will offer fuller features.



5. Strava Run GPS Tracker

Available on: iOS/Android

Price: Free

If competition motivates you, then this is a good app to monitor your progress against others and climb a leaderboard based on different criteria.

Get the right trainers for you

The trainer market has exploded with technology, but what's worth your money?

The one thing that you absolutely must have in order to start running is a pair of trainers. This is also the one vital thing that we would urge you invest in, because it will help you running from the outset.

This doesn't mean that you have to spend a fortune, but we would suggest that you get your feet checked at a running shop and buy from a suggested range of shoes – tell them your budget first so that you only see shoes that are appropriate. Also, don't wear the same shoes as you do for walking, netball, the gym and so on, because these wear down in different ways, so you risk injury by running in them as well.

Traditional shoes

Running shoes traditionally come in three main categories. These are neutral, support and cushioning, and which you need depends on your running style. This is to do with your 'gait', which is the way that your foot hits the ground, rolls through its motion and pushes off again.

If you are a 'neutral' runner, then your feet tend to stay in a roughly straight line as they move through your foot strike. This is ideally what you want to happen. If you are a neutral runner, you are looking for a shoe that offers just the right amount of support and cushioning to let your foot move without trying to over-correct.

Not everyone is a neutral runner, though. You may pronate, which is when your foot rolls to one side or the other as you run. This can lead to an uneven distribution of weight, as well as putting pressure on your instep, heel and ankles, which can lead to injury. Support trainers and cushioned trainers are designed to correct these problems as you run, making your foot fall in a more neutral pattern.

There are some home DIY tests that you can try to find out whether you pronate or not, such as the 'wet foot test' (which we will detail later in this section of the book), but the most accurate way to find out what trainer you need is to get a 'gait' analysis.



Get the right trainers for you for the best running experience



Brooks Cascadia 10

Price: £105/\$120

Website: www.brooksrunning.com

If you want to run off-road, get the right shoe for the job



adidas ultra boost

Price: £130/\$180

Website: www.adidas.com

For an extra comfortable run with added cushioning



Nike FREE 4.0 Flyknit 4.0

Price: £110/\$120

Website: www.store.nike.com

Experience barefoot running with minimalist shoes

A gait test is done in a running shop. This is slightly different in every shop, but generally it involves running on a treadmill while you are watched or filmed from behind so that the sales assistant can see whether your foot rolls inwards, outwards or not at all. From this assessment, they can then give you the right kind of shoes to try on. You will usually run in these shoes on the treadmill again to see how they feel, so that you can decide what kind to go for. In many shops a gait analysis is done for free, but with a growing trend of people taking the test in-store and then hunting for cheaper bargains online, many have started charging for the test, with the money offered as a discount against any shoes bought there. Ask in your local store for their policy.

Check the returns policy too, as some will let you try them out for a period of time and change them if they are not right for you.

Going ultra-light

Over the last couple of years, ultra-light shoes have become popular. The minimalist shoe follows the trend for barefoot running, allowing you to feel the ground as you move while still offering protection from the elements. It's a shoe that gives you a measure of support, but without adding any bulk and weight. The idea is that they give you a more natural and efficient foot strike, but it does take some getting used to as it will change the way that your foot hits the ground, especially if you're used to much more supportive trainers.

Many of the big brands now offer a minimalist shoe and they come in various degrees. For example, the Nike Free range has

a 5.0 model for beginners to barefoot running that will ease you in gently, then the 4.0 and the 3.0 that offer a progressively more natural experience. The Brooks PureProject is designed for a 'purer' running experience, hence the name, and comes in a variety of options.

You can tell the difference with these shoes as soon as you pick them up, as the sole is flexible rather than rigid, so that it can move with your feet. One thing to bear in mind is that you might find your feet start to hurt as you run further in them. They tend to be better for shorter distances, especially at first.

If you fancy giving them a go, then go to a proper running shop and try them out for yourself first. You might find them a perfect fit.

Super cushioning

The polar opposite to the ultra-light barefoot trend are shoes that offer lots and lots of cushioning. Leading the way is HOKA ONE ONE (www.hokaoneone.eu), a brand that has been lauded by runners over the last year. These shoes look a little strange at first because they have a "higher volume, softer density and greater rebounding foam than standard running shoes". Overall they offer around 50 per cent more cushioning for shock absorption. HOKA ONE ONE call its 'midsole geometry' Meta-Rocker, which is a good description as the shape of the shoe means that your foot 'rocks' through its stride, which is designed to support your form. The trainers still come in road and trail varieties as with 'normal' running shoes.

HOKA ONE ONE is not alone in this category. Other shoes to look at include adidas ultra boost, Asics 33-M and Brooks Transcend.

Hitting the trails

Some runners like the roads and some don't. Even if you're a beginner, there is no reason not to head off-road. You might even find it beneficial, as softer terrain can help your joints, which can hurt after pounding the pavements for too long. If you're lucky enough to live near forests or country parks, then the woodland trails are a perfect surface for running on and building up the time you spend running.

If it's been raining, then leaves and grass can get slippery, you might have mud to contend with or even ice in winter months. This is where dedicated trail shoes can come in handy, as they are designed to have better grip on these surfaces, as well as offering a more waterproof outer layer.

Proper trail shoes are only for running on trails, as they don't offer the cushioning needed to cope with tarmac or concrete, so your foot can move across the terrain. There are plenty of low-cost trail shoes available and most are a neutral shoe, as you are less likely to need the same support as you do on the road. This means that you could get injured by using them on a road. There are some really good low-cost options to consider – take a look at Adidas or Inov8 – but most brands now offer trail shoes.

If you need to run on road to get to a trail, then you want a cross-terrain shoe that offers the best of both worlds. These can be a bit heavier than a normal road shoe, but they are supportive. For example, the Brooks Adrenaline ASR is exactly the same as the Brooks Adrenaline GTS road shoe, except that the tread is more rugged and the outer material has GORE-TEX for durability.

Men's trainers

The most important piece of running gear you'll ever buy

Light and bright

Recommended: Mizuno Wave Sayonara 2

Price: £100 / \$119.99

Website: www.mizuno.eu

A neutral shoe which offers a lightweight and comfortable ride that has cushioning and support where it's needed. They are great for those runners who are covering short to middle distance in particular, and they allow you to feel the road without being unstable. They are much lighter than some of its peers, and offer breathable materials to keep your feet cool. This updated version has a new sockliner as well, making them more resilient.



For exceptional comfort and style

Recommended: Brooks Glycerin 12

Price: £130 / \$150

Website: www.brooksrunning.com

The Glycerin is a neutral running shoe that has been designed for the ultimate in comfort. It uses Super BioMoGo, which provides 20 per cent more adaptable cushioning so that it gives you the comfort that is right for your foot. It also uses 3D Fit Print overlays to build a comfy structure, as well as reduce the overall weight of the shoe. It comes in a choice of bold colours too, if you're bored of the standard white options.



Perfect for neutral runners

Recommended: Asics Gel-Cumulus 16

Price: £100 / \$115

Website: www.asics.co.uk

The latest update to the popular Cumulus is lighter than the previous model, but maintains its reputation for comfort on the run. It uses FluidRide midsole technology for better efficiency on long runs, and has you start to get tired, it uses a Full Length Guidance Line to help move your foot naturally through its gait. There is plenty of cushioning and shock absorbency built in to help absorb some of the impact of road running. It also comes in a choice of funky colourways.



Good value

Recommended: Nike Air Zoom Pegasus Flash

Price: £95/ \$115

Website: www.nike.com

This shoe uses Nike Zoom Air cushioning for comfort, but it maintains its light weight and offers some support too. The internal heel counter wraps around your foot so that you feel secure as you run. The outer materials repel water, so that they keep your foot drier than some other shoes, and it offers reflectivity so that you can be seen in the dark. It is a well-priced shoe as well.



Performance boost

Recommended: adidas ultra boost

Price: £130/\$180

Website: www.adidas.com

These shoes use adidas' boost™ foam in the midsole of the trainer making them super-responsive. This technology is designed to return energy as you run, and the shoes are well cushioned so that they are very comfortable. The upper material is stretchy to support your foot without restricting its natural motion.



Go off-road

Recommended: Brooks Cascadia 10

Price: £105/\$120

Website: www.brooksrunning.com

If your runs tend to be on trail paths, mud tracks or grass, then a trail shoe is better suited to your needs. These ones from Brooks are perfect for even the trickiest of terrain, with a 'ballistic rock shield' to protect your foot as you run. As with Brooks road shoes, there is the Bio-MoGo DNA midsole, which gives custom cushioning to suit your feet. They are designed to be comfortable and manage moisture, especially essential on wet terrain. Unlike some trail shoes, they are reasonably lightweight too.

Choosing your shoes

The best thing to do is to visit a dedicated running shop and get professional help for choosing the right trainer for you. However, if you'd rather do it yourself, here is some general advice. Runners tend to be overpronators, underpronators or normal runners. To 'pronate' is when your foot rolls inwards when you land. Overpronators need to look for increased stability or motion-control shoes that will stop the foot from rolling so much, reducing injury

risk. Underpronators don't roll enough and therefore there is less cushioning when you hit the ground; they need cushioned shoes. Finally, normal runners run efficiently, pronating just the right amount to cushion the stride, without becoming unstable, so they don't need shoes with too much motion control or cushioning.

Try this test to see what kind of shoe you need. Simply wet your foot and step on a surface that will show your footprint.

1. Flat footprint

A flat foot shows overpronation; this needs more motion control.



2. Normal footprint

This is the footprint of a neutral runner; mild stability is perfect.



3. High footprint

A high arch shows underpronation; cushioning is needed.



Women's trainers

The best buys for the female foot

Support and cushioning

Recommended: **Brooks Adrenaline 15**

Price: **£110 / \$130**

Website: **www.brooksrunning.com**

This popular women's shoe offers both support and cushioning for moderate pronation. It uses Brooks' BioMoGo DNA midsole, which adapts to your run and supports your foot through its gait. It is heavier than some of its peers, but it is incredibly comfortable to wear. It has moisture-managing materials to help keep your feet both cool and dry. With each release, new vibrant colourways are introduced so that you can match your own style.



Comfort and low impact

Recommended: **Mizuno Wave Enigma 4**

Price: **£130 / \$140**

Website: **www.mizuno.eu**

This is the fourth edition of the popular Wave shoe, which features an effective midsole technology for a comfortable ride. The Wave is shaped to dissipate force away from the foot, lowering the impact. Your foot should move seamlessly through its motion and the shoe is also 30 per cent lighter with no loss of comfort or performance. It is well ventilated, but also incredibly durable too. It comes in a choice of colours so you can match your kit, and there are reflective elements on the shoe as well.

Great value for beginners

Recommended: **Asics GEL-PULSE 6**

Price: **£85 / \$N/A**

Website: **www.asics.co.uk**

It can be hard to find a decent running shoe for less than £100, but this one is really good value. It is a neutral shoe but offers rear and forefoot gel for shock absorption as you run. It is designed with high abrasion rubber, meaning that it will last. It has a removable sockliner, discrete eyelets and a Trusstic System, which helps to create a shoe that is both stable but lightweight. Comes in a choice of different colourways too.



Light and cushioned

Recommended: Nike Air Zoom Vomero 10

Price: £120 / \$140

Website: www.nike.com

The Nike range keeps getting better and better with each new release, with added features for runners of all levels. This popular shoe offers plenty of cushioning for neutral runners, but it is still lightweight. It uses Nike Zoom Air in the heel and forefront of the shoe, as well as Lunarion foam in the midsole. The two work together to make it comfortable to run throughout your gait. It uses a Flymesh upper to keep your feet cool. There is a choice of five colours to pick from.



Innovative design

Recommended: New Balance 780v4

Price: £85 / \$N/A

Website: www.newbalance.co.uk

This is an affordable shoe that can often be found at a great price online (at the time of writing, it was £60 on the New Balance website). It is a neutral shoe that is perfect for new runners who want durability and comfort. It is both lightweight and breathable, and comes in a couple of colour options to suit.



Subtle support

Recommended: Brooks Ravenna 6

Price: £110 / \$130

Website: www.brooksrunning.com

The latest version of the Ravenna shoe, the Ravenna 6, was only released in January 2015. This means that it has all the latest technologies from Brooks, and it is lighter than previous models too. It comes in a range of bright colours, and a choice of width fittings, so that you can find the exact shoe to fit you.

Looking after your running shoes

Dry them out

When it's raining outside, your trainers will get sopping wet. You need to try to get them thoroughly dry before you next wear them or bacteria can form. Take the laces out of the trainer and, if you can, take out the insole too. These will dry better separately. Next, stuff your trainers with newspaper for a couple of hours to absorb all the excess water, before taking it out and letting them dry naturally. It is best to let trainers dry in their own time, and not in front

of a heat source, as this can affect the glue that keeps the trainers together.

Keep them clean

Don't be tempted to put your trainers in the washing machine. This will start to break down the fabrics and materials in the shoe, and you'll need to replace them sooner. Instead, make sure that you clean off the sole and the outer layer in lightweight water to remove grime and mud. You can wash the laces to get them white

again; and if you can take the insoles out, rinse these separately. Let everything dry naturally before putting shoes back together again.

Store them correctly

You might be tempted to pop them back in their box. However, trainers need to be kept in a dry, room-temperature environment where the air can circulate. This will help them to dry out and ensure that bacteria isn't left to thrive in damp, enclosed environments.

Tops

A good technical tee will keep you cool and dry during long runs

Warm weather wear

Recommended: **Helly Hansen VTR Mesh Singlet (women's)** and **Mesh Lifa Flow SS (men's)**

Price: **£20 and £40 / \$25 and \$55**

Website: **www.hellyhansen.com**

The new summer range of Helly Hansen has some great warm weather kit. This funky singlet for women is perfect for running and cross-training, offering quick-dry fabric and a feminine fit. As it's lightweight, it's great for layering. For men, this short-sleeved t-shirt pulls excess heat away from the skin and has a full mesh back to keep you extra cool.



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Ideal for winter

Recommended: **Nike Element Half Zip**

Price: **£40 / \$60**

Website: **www.nike.com**

When it starts to get colder outside, then you will need to think about adding warmer running clothes to your kit draw. This top is lightweight, but will help to keep you warm. It comes in a range of different colours, including some high-vis options. It has mesh ventilation to help keep you dry from sweat and it feels soft against the skin. It has a loop on the upper back that you can use to keep media player cords out of the way, and the zip means you can have the neck up high to keep the warmth in, or unzip to cool down.



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Designed for comfort

Recommended: **Tycho Purple RUN vest**

Price: **£22 / \$N/A**

Website: **www.tychoclothing.com**

There's a good chance that you haven't heard of Tycho Clothing, but it's a relatively new UK-based sportswear brand offering well-designed, colourful and unique kit. A lot of it is aimed at yoga and similar sports, but it does a lovely line in run gear, and their vibrant printed leggings are sure to grab attention. The brand uses the best fabrics to ensure that the kit looks good and performs well. This vest offers is very lightweight and it contains micropores so that it dries quickly. It is a flattering design and the length is great if you prefer it to flow over your hips.

Made to run

Recommended: Helly Hansen VTR Printed SS

Price: £25 / \$28

Website: www.hellyhansen.com

Running kit doesn't have to be boring, although men's kit does tend to shy away from patterns more than women's wear. This bright, graphic T-shirt has all the technical features that you could want – quick-dry fabric, comfort and UPF +40 – while still looking cool. The design has flatlock seams so that it doesn't rub as you move and it works just as well as casual wear as it does for running gear.

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Generate your own warmth

Recommended: Nike Epic Women's

Running Tank Top

Price: £38 / \$60

Website: www.nike.com

In summer, when the sun is out, a vest top is your best friend, helping to keep you cool. This funky-looking number has Nike's own Dri-FIT fabric to wick away sweat and a mesh back helps freshen you up. The racerback style and the v-neck are flattering and practical, with added comfort thanks to flat seams. There are some reflective elements for when it gets a bit darker and unlike many tops, this offers a small back zip pocket to keep a key handy.

Look cool, stay cool

Recommended: Brooks Equilibrium SS II

Price: £28 / \$45

Website: www.brooksrunning.com

These short-sleeved t-shirts are available for both men and women. The women's version comes in a range of cool colours and patterns, so there is bound to be one to suit your style. The men's version still has plenty of colours, just minus the funky patterns. While it looks pretty effortless, it is designed with the latest fabric technology to keep you cool and dry, as well as comfortable on your runs.

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Layering up

Tights

Whether male or female, a good pair of running tights is worth investing in. As they are tight on the skin, they help to keep you nice and warm. They are made of wicking material, so they also help to 'wick' sweat away from the skin, which could otherwise leave you chilly. If you go for compression tights, then these help to boost circulation and prevent muscle soreness and tears.

Shorts

Shorts are a good purchase. In summer they can be worn on their own to keep you nice and cool. They also have the dual purpose of covering you up a bit if running tights make you feel uncomfortable or vulnerable. They give you extra pockets, too, and come in a choice of lengths, from super, super short, to longer knee lengths. Make sure that they don't rub on bare legs.

Vests

A good vest helps to wick sweat and therefore keep you cool. For men, a simple racing vest with cooling mesh panels and high-vis stripes are all you need. For women, there is a bit more choice. You can go for loose-fitting designs the same as men for comfort, or there are tight, fitted vests, usually with built-in breast support, which help everything stay in place.

Long-sleeved T-shirts

For winter, a long-sleeved T-shirt is key. These help to keep you warm, but they are made of materials that still let your skin breathe. Avoid cotton T-shirts, as these will soak up sweat and make you feel colder, as well as adding weight as they absorb moisture.

Jackets

A good running jacket can last for years. Make sure that it has pockets, bright panels and an inner mesh to keep you sweat-free. Also look for ones that offer wind protection and elasticated wrists to stop cold air from creeping in. Generally, hoods will fall down, so you are better off with a proper running hat, but hoods may come in useful before and after races. Some jackets have removable sleeves too.

Bottoms

Shorts or tights, long or 3/4, the choice is yours!

Essential summer shorts

Recommended: Helly Hansen Pace 2-in-1 Distance Shorts 7"

Price: £50 / \$65

Website: www.hellyhansen.com

Helly Hansen is a great brand for outdoor clothing and its running gear is no exception. These new men's shorts for Summer 2015 are quick drying to warm days. Having the tights underneath keeps you snug and well supported, whereas the outer layer has two energy gel pockets for longer runs, reflective elements and a key pocket. The longer length is perfect for newer runners as well.



2-in-1 style

Recommended: Nike 5cm

Perforated Rival 2-in-1 Shorts

Price: £33 / \$60

Website: www.nike.com

2-in-1 shorts are popular with female runners as they offer the best of both worlds. The inner layer offers compression, so that it holds your legs firmly, whereas the outer layer is good for covering you a little more, and your modesty is protected should they ride up. They have Dri-FIT technology to keep you cool and pockets for your essential items. There is a choice of bright colour options too.

All-season option

Recommended: Brooks Infiniti Capri III

Price: £40 / \$68

Website: www.brooksrunning.com

These stylish 3/4-length trousers from Brooks come in a huge range of colour options, so you can choose both style and substance. Don't let the funky colours distract you from the high-quality piece of kit, as these tights are made with moisture-wicking compression fabric, so you feel comfortable, as well as supported. They measure an 18-inch inseam, though a longer style is also available in colour and pattern options. In order to reduce irritation, there are no outseams, and the waistband is wide and flat, with a drawstring to fit to your body. There is a back pocket that is invisible when closed, and this is moisture proof, so you can use it to carry your phone or music player. There are silicone grippers at the leg openings to keep them from riding up, and there are reflective elements on both the front and the back.



Breathable for comfort

Recommended: **Asics Woven 7"**

Running Shorts

Price: **£35 / \$40**

Website: **www.asics.co.uk**

These shorts are made with a lightweight material that stretches in four directions so that you are comfortable, helping to improve running performance. They have Motion Dry technology, so that sweat is wicked away from the skin. There is a small zip pocket on the back, as well as reflective prints to help you be seen.



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Comfort and style

Recommended: **Asics Stripe Knee Tights**

Price: **£38 / \$60**

Website: **www.asics.co.uk**

These 3/4 length running tights allow you to look stylish while still well supported and comfortable. They have back panels to give you extra support, and a wide elasticated waistband that won't cut into your skin. They have 360-degree reflectivity to keep you seen in the dark. The 3/4 style is perfect for the warmer weather, and there is a full-length version available for the winter if you want a warmer option. There is a small zip pocket on the back for your keys.

Comfort for men

Recommended: **Nike 18cm Printed Distance Shorts**

Price: **£33 / \$55**

Website: **www.nike.com**

If you prefer slightly longer shorts when running, then these 18cm ones are a great buy. They offer sweat-wicking materials to help keep you cool and they have built-in briefs so that it is comfortable when you run. There is storage too, with a small inner pocket, a slide pocket and a zipped pocket. The printed designs come in a choice of colours as well.



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Why wear tights?

The thought of wearing 'tights' can be a bit scary for a new runner, but there are real reasons why we have suggested that these are your best option for running. Most good running tights now are known as 'compression clothing', which means that they stick tight to your skin and help compress your body.

The benefits of these include increased blood circulation, which helps the muscles work at their maximum, powering you through the runs. The snug fit helps to keep your muscles warm, which can prevent injury, too. If you are going for speed, then they are also more streamlined and the lack of drag will help you knock those seconds off a PB. Shorts and loose trousers can catch the wind and pull you back, but for longer distances, the time benefits are probably only minimal.

A lot of tights boast of even more benefits built in, such as performance enhancement. But when you are just starting out it isn't worth getting caught up in the hype. At this stage, comfort is key and running tights are often simply more comfortable than loose trousers. You are less likely to suffer from chafing and rubbing, as the tights are moulded to your legs. They also keep you warmer, as they don't allow the wind to get in through the ankles or waist band.

If you feel self-conscious, then consider wearing a pair of shorts over the top of your tights, so that you still get all the benefits but you feel a bit more covered up.

When you are picking running tights, there are a few things to bear in mind. First, you can get a variety of lengths. There are shorts, which are usually down to just above the knee and are great in summer. The next length is the three-quarter or Capri, which come to just below the knee. These tend to be the most common length for women. Finally, you can go full length, which reaches to the ankle. You may need to try on a few brands for the full-length versions, as they need to hit just above your ankle bone for maximum comfort and leg length varies.

Jackets

Cover up when the temperature drops and the rain falls

Lightweight protection

Recommended: **Helly Hansen Aspire jacket (Women's)** and **Pace Bloack Jacket (Men's)**

Price: **£90 and £120 / \$100 and \$160**

Website: **www.hellyhansen.com**

This pair of jackets is new for summer, designed for when you still need a jacket. The women's Aspire is incredibly lightweight and quick-dry – perfect for unexpected showers – and it is made from wind-block fabric. Similarly, the men's Pace Block has the same features with added underarm ventilation to disperse heat, a chest key pocket as well as 360-degree reflectivity.



Great value

Recommended: **Ronhill Pursuit Jacket**

Price: **£40 / \$N/A**

Website: **www.ronhill.com**

Ronhill is well-known in the sports clothing world, as it has been around for a long time. It is known for its high-quality, but it still remains quite affordable. This jacket comes in a choice of different colourways for both male and female runners, offering lightweight design, breathable fabric and wind resistance. It has reflective elements to keep you seen, zipped pockets for your essentials and a back vent for added ventilation.

For trail running

Recommended: **Nike Printed Trail Kiger Full-Zip**

Price: **£115 / \$150**

Website: **www.nike.com**

Available in both male and female versions this stand-out jacket is perfect if you prefer to take your runs off-road. It will wick away sweat to keep you warm and dry, zip up to the chin for added warmth and if it gets too hot, then it packs down into a chest pocket. The reflective elements help in low-light areas and the pattern certainly helps you to stand out from the crowd. There are pockets both on the side and at the chest, so you can easily carry your essentials with you as you run. Used with layers, this jacket will see you through the warmer summer months and the winter, so it's a good investment.



Fusing fashion and function

Recommended: Salomon Fast

Wing Hoodie

Price: £80 / \$110

Website:

www.salomon.com

This is Salomon's lightest jacket that is perfect for all hiking and running conditions. Available for men and women in a multitude of colours, this jacket has a great fit with a chin protector, high fastening zip and a hood that can be stored away when not needed, keeping out the unpredictable winter weather. It can be packed down into its own chest pocket if needed to give you options if you get too warm as you are running. It is highly visible and the zips are water resistant. Other extras are zipped pockets for storage and it is machine washable.



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Funky patterns

Recommended: Asics Women's Lightweight Running Jacket

Price: £75 / \$N/A

Website: www.asics.co.uk

This jacket certainly proves that running kit doesn't have to be boring! It comes in a choice of colours for women (there is a men's version too), and it still packs a punch when it comes to the latest features.

It has Motion Protect to keep you dry and warm in bad weather, but it's super-lightweight too so it's perfect for summer running. It offers 360-degree reflectivity to keep you safe. There is a small zip pocket to hold your keys on the chest.



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Carrying your essentials

When you are out running, there are certain items that you will want to keep on your person, such as your house keys, a phone and a music player, for example. If you are running home from work, you may have more items that you need to transport. Luckily, there are plenty of storage options out there.

At the most basic level, you could store your gear on you without any additional bags or belts. Look for running trousers that have a key pocket in them, as these are usually pretty snug and will stop keys from jangling around. Jackets with multiple pockets are perfect for housing items evenly across your body, and some even come with attachments and holes for headphone cables to fit through so that they are neatly hidden away.

If you need more room, or you are running in just a vest top, then take a look at running belts, which fit around your waist and are the perfect size for a few key items. Some just have a couple of zipped pockets for essentials, but others will have water bottle holders too, which mean that you can keep your hands free. Just make sure that the belt is adjustable, so that you can fit it to your body

perfectly. If it is moving around too much, it will rub against your skin. For commutes, get a running-specific bag. These are designed to hold bulkier items, but are cushioned for comfort. They have a multitude of straps

around the waist and chest, which again keep the bag perfectly still while you run. These don't come cheap, but don't be tempted to use a bog-standard rucksack, as this will rub and can leave blisters on your shoulders.



Bags are good for commuting



Belts can help with essentials

Accessories

Essential extras for your runs

Small and discreet music player

Recommended: Apple iPod Shuffle

Price: £40 / \$49

Website: www.apple.com

The Apple iPod Shuffle is the perfect music companion for on the run. You can use your phone, but we recommend saving the battery where possible, especially if you are already using a running app, in case you need it in an emergency. The Shuffle is so tiny, you won't even notice you are wearing it, and it clips onto your clothing wherever is comfortable. It comes in a number of colour options and it simply lets you hit play and hear your tunes as you workout. It has simple controls that are easy to work on the move, and a VoiceOver option if you want to hear the name of the song or artist you are listening to.



Stay-put sports headphones

Recommended:

yurbuds

Inspire 100

Price: £16.99 / \$19.99

Website: <http://yurbuds.com/>

These headphones are often recommended for running by runners, and for good reason. They have TwistLock™ technology to ensure that they don't fall out of your ears when moving. They are sweatproof and have a FlexSoft™ Comfort Fit to make sure they don't hurt your ears. They allow ambient sound to come through so that you can hear traffic sounds and other road users to help you stay safe. They come in a range of colour choices as well.



Funky legs

Recommended: Running Compression Socks

Price: £28.99 / N/A

Website: www.rmkitstop.com

While compression socks are mainly seen on the super-elite, they have a wide range of benefits for runners of all levels. These feature 20-30mm-Hg compression (depending on size), which reduces muscle vibration, reduces the build up of lactic acid, helps muscles recover faster, provides relief for tired legs, improves blood circulation and helps to prevent injuries. You can run in them and/or wear them after a run for fresh-feeling legs. There are a wide range of funky styles available on the website, including unisex designs.



Essential ID

Recommended: TagNix ID Bracelet

Price: From £9.95 / \$N/A

Website: <http://tagnix.co.uk/>

Safety is incredibly important when you are out for a run and these ID bracelets are a great way to ensure that if you are taken ill, for example, your medical details and contact information is easy to find. The removable stainless steel lets you have up to six lines of text as needed.



Keep sweat out of your eyes

Recommended: Halo Headband II

Price: £14.95 / \$N/A

Website: www.haloheadbanduk.com

If you sweat quite a bit when you run, you might find that it drips in your eyes and stings. Wearing a sweatband on your head could be the answer. This one from Halo redirects sweat to the sides of the head and away from your face. It uses patented Sweat Block Technology to keep your eyes dry. It can be worn on its own, but in winter it also fits underneath all types of hats. It doesn't use elastic, so it won't wear out while you use or wash it regularly. Designed for both men and women, it comes in a choice of 13 colourways so there is sure to be one to suit you.

Men's underwear

Recommended: RunBreeze Men's Runderwear Support Briefs

Price: £16.00 / \$N/A

Website: www.runbreeze.com

This might seem a lot to spend on a pair of pants, but these have been especially designed for comfort and support when running. They come in Medium or Large, have moisture-wicking properties and can help regulate your body temperature.



Women's underwear

Recommended: RunBreeze Women's Runderwear Comfort Briefs

Price: £16.00 / \$N/A

Website: www.runbreeze.com

The women's version comes as briefs (shown) or pants, which are designed to fit the female figure perfectly and not cause any irritation when moving. The waistband is flexible, so that it doesn't cut into the body and they are ultra-light too.

Be wary of weight – how to save space

It is easy to get caught up in all the running accessories that are available to you, so make sure you pick the best ones suited to your needs. By carrying too much weight on your back or around your waist, you will be putting extra strain on your muscles and forcing them to work harder. This can throw you out of balance and push your running form out of line, which can lead to injury. Carrying a water bottle over a longer distance can also lead to problems, as clenching your hand can put more strain on your arm and shoulder muscles, leading to back pain.

We recommend always choosing a running belt that has space for a water bottle and that sits comfortably in the small of your back. Look online and at our suggestions to see how the styles and costs vary.

Another way of limiting the amount of weight you're carrying around is to find multi-functioning gadgets. Replace a GPS watch with a phone app that can monitor your pace and distance, as well as store music. If you don't want to ditch the GPS device, then look out for an all-in-one watch that will keep time, calories and distance. You never want to carry too many expensive gadgets with you when running.



Product: Run And Move Flask Belt

Price: £19.50 / \$N/A

Website: www.on-one.co.uk/



Recommended: Inov8 Race Elite 3

Price: £29.50/ \$44.99

Website: <http://inov-8.com>



Product: Camelbak Arc 1

Price: £24.99 / \$35.00

Website: www.camelbak.com



Product: Ultimate Performance AirForce 2

Price: £20.99 / \$N/A

Website: www.ultimate-performance.co.uk

GPS watches

Track your running progress with these GPS-enabled devices for men and women

All-day fitness tracking

Recommended: **Garmin**

Forerunner 15

Price: £119.99 / \$139.99

Website: www.garmin.com

An upgrade on the popular entry-level Forerunner 10. The Forerunner 15 offers all of the same features, giving pace, calories, time and distance, however it has a better battery life (eight hours). It also monitors your daily step count and activity levels, reminding you to move if you have been still for too long – a great tool for improving your overall fitness.



For a fast GPS fix

Recommended: **TomTom Runner GPS Watch**

Price: £99.99 / \$129.99

Website: www.tomtom.com

Until now, TomTom has lent its name and skill to other sports watches, but now it has one of its own, especially designed for runners. Its big plus point is the speed with which it can find satellites and therefore your location, meaning that you can get started on your run faster thanks to its QuickGPSFix technology. It also has a large display, so it is easy to see when you are running, and it has a built-in Graphical Training Partner to help motivate you through each session. It can also be purchased with a heart rate monitor (£139.99/\$199.99).



Sleek design

Recommended: **Polar M400**

Price: £134.50 / \$199.95

(without HRM)

Website: www.polar.com

This is another watch that is perfect for all-round fitness tracking, as it monitors your calories burned, steps and activity throughout the day. It has a modern, sleek design, making it stand out from other watches on the market. You can set targets to help you improve, and there is a handy Back to Start navigation option to get you home. There is the option to buy a Heart Rate Monitor with the watch, which would give more accurate calorie burn results.



Wrist-based heart rate

Recommended: **Epson RunSense**

SF-810V

Price: £299.99 / \$N/A

Website: www.epson.co.uk

Okay, it's quite pricey, but that's because it's offering technology that's still quite new. It has an optical heart rate sensor, which means you don't need to wear it with a chest strap. It has fantastic battery life of over 20 hours, which is well above average. It can be set up for interval training and as an indoor mode for treadmill use.

Extended features

Recommended: **Suunto Ambit3 Run**

Price: **£199 / \$299**

Website: **www.suunto.com**

Suunto is a brand that you might not have heard of, but it is well-known for its GPS watches, in particular for mountaineers. The Ambit3 Run, however, is designed with runners in mind. It is available with or without a heart rate monitor (the price here is without) and comes in a choice of colours. It offers a 15-hour battery life and 5-second GPS accuracy, providing speed, pace, distance and altitude information. The compatible phone app expands the feature set even further, offering voice guidance and the ability to plan routes, combining the best of watch and app worlds.



The budget option

Recommended:

Soleus GPS Mini

Price: **£99 / \$99**

Website:

www.soleusrunning.com

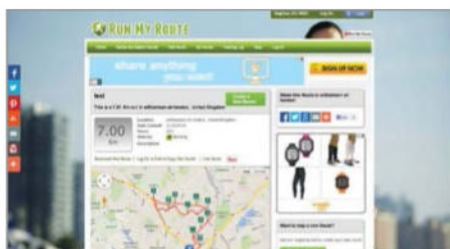
Soleus is well-known for offering basic, affordable watches, but they are getting better and better with every release. The GPS Mini comes in a choice of funky colours and the smaller size is great for tiny wrists. It offers speed, pace, distance and pace tracking, charges easily via USB, has a calorie counter and the display can be customised so that you see the information that is useful to you as you run. It has just four buttons, so it's easy to just pick up and just start running with.



Other ways to track your runs

Mapping websites

The cheapest way to track your runs is to do so afterwards, using a free mapping website when you get home. All you need to remember is where you ran, and then use an online map to draw your route as accurately as possible. It will then show you your total distance. You can input the time that it took for you to complete the route and your weight, then you are presented with both calorie and pace information. You can store your routes privately on the site, or you can share them with others, as well as search routes that already exist around your local area. Websites to try for this purpose include www.mapmyrun.com, www.walkjogrun.net, www.runmyroute.com and <http://gb.mapometer.com>.



Apps

Many smartphones, including the iPhone, have GPS functionality built in. This means that it can be used to help map your route as you run. Usually, you just have to start the app and wait for the phone's GPS to lock onto a satellite. You can then start running and every step you take will be monitored on the screen. When you are done, you'll then be able to review a map of your run, the distance, pace and time, the calories burned and even a graph of elevation. You can then choose to share your route on Facebook, Twitter or via email. Search the App Store and you will find plenty of options, and check out page 120 for more apps and recommendations.



On the treadmill

If you like to run indoors – maybe the weather has turned, or you need to workout at home due to childcare – then chances are that you use a treadmill. While the screen shows you all of the information that you need to know, you can't export that information with you to compare to other runs. Luckily, many GPS watches offer an indoor option. The GPS won't work, as you're essentially running on the spot, but a compatible 'footpod' attaches to your shoes and sends information to your watch regarding pace and distance. It's not as accurate as GPS, but it's better than no data.



Where to buy

The top ten online retailers for purchasing your running kit

1: Sweatshop

Website: www.sweatshop.co.uk

Sweatshop is the UK's largest online specialist running store and it always has the very latest gear. Its sales are great too, and it usually has unbeatable offers all year round. It has some added bonuses over other online stores too, including a whole section of advice on picking the right kit, and a one-hour response 'Contact Us' option, which means that you can quickly receive help on your purchase.

2: Wiggle

Website: www.wiggle.co.uk/run

Wiggle used to be known for cycling gear, but its run catalogue has really expanded and has a great range of different brands. It has a price-match promise, so you are guaranteed a bargain. It uses the Collect+ service, so you can arrange for delivery to a location near you if that's easier than standard post. And watch out for hidden extras in your parcels too... Wiggle likes to throw in things like sweets just for fun!

3: Decathlon

Website: www.decathlon.co.uk

Decathlon aims to bring kit for all different sports together under one roof, which means that they don't have the largest range of running clothes. However, they don't just stock the run-of-the-mill brands; this is a good place to visit to check out gear you might not have heard of before, but is great quality.

4: SportsShoes.com

Website: www.sportsshoes.com

If you are looking for a bargain pair of new trainers, then this is a must-visit. If you know what you need already, then you can find amazing prices on all popular brands. The most common sizes do sell out fast, but there is new stock all the time, so keep checking back. You can save up to 80% on shoes and clothing.



Featured manufacturers

Adidas – www.adidas.com **Apple** – www.apple.com **ASICS** – www.asics.com **Brooks** – www.brooksrunning.com **Camelbak** – www.camelbak.com
New Balance – www.newbalance.com **Nike** – www.nike.com **Polar** – www.polar.fi/en **PUMA** – www.puma.com **Ronhill** – www.ronhill.com

5: Marks and Spencer

Website: www.marksandspencer.com

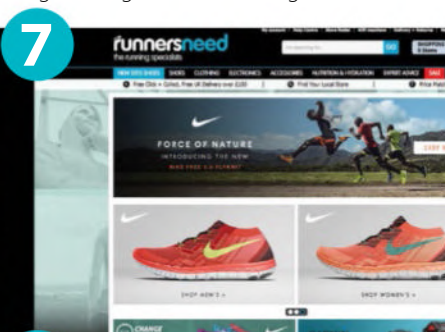
The good-old M&S is a secret haven for runners who want good-value, technical kit that looks cool. From bright-coloured tank tops and slimming cropped capris for women, to performance t-shirts and shorts for men.



6: SportsDirect

Website: www.sportsdirect.com

If you have ever been into a Sports Direct store and been overwhelmed by the cluttered shelves and sky-high rails, then the website is no different. It's flashy and full of 'Save' banners, but it's great for good kit on a budget.



7: runnersneed

Website: www.runnersneed.com

This glossy site is a running specialist, and it has a great range of well-known brands like Asics and Nike, through to more technical kit, like Odlo. If you are looking for performance and functionality over fashion, then this site is definitely worth a visit. It's not the cheapest around, but the quality of the kit is top-notch, which more than makes up for it.

8: Run 4 It

Website: www.run4it.com

Run 4 It is a popular chain of stores across Scotland that offer gait analysis by expert, trained sales staff and runners, as well as great kit at good prices. The range is also available online, where you can browse shoes, clothing and accessories. The sales are definitely worth a look, and there is free delivery if you spend over £50 or free collect from store if you are local. The Gift Guide is helpful if you're looking for a present for a fussy runner.

9: Go Outdoors

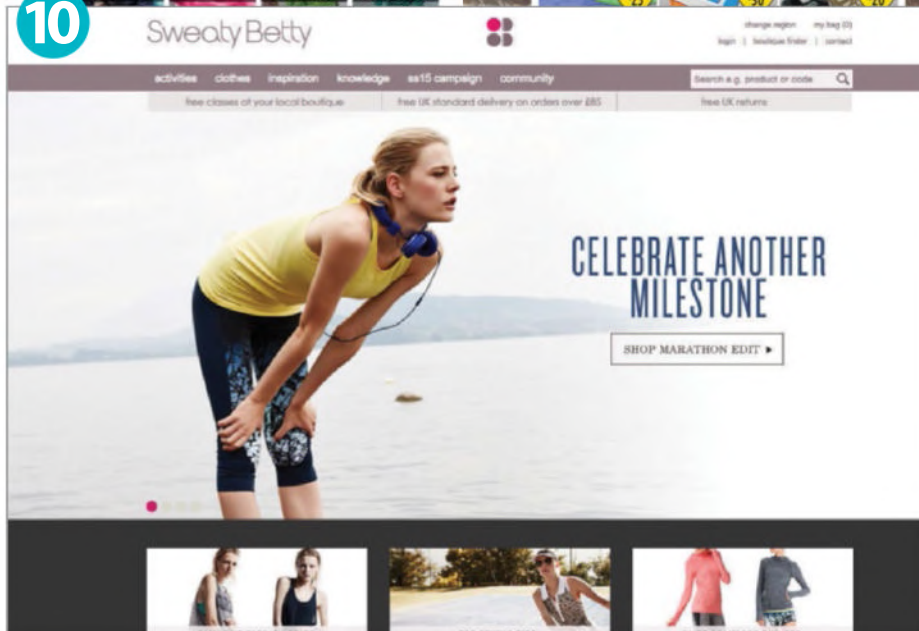
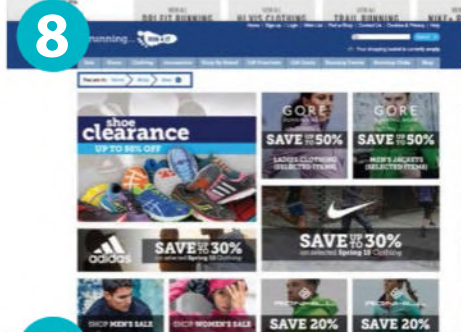
Website: www.gooutdoors.co.uk/running

Go Outdoors is better known for its walking, hiking and camping gear, but it does have a dedicated running section on the website. The kit is well priced, with bargains to be found regularly, and there is a great range for both men and women. This site is particularly good if you are interested in trail running or cross country, as they have trail shoes, maps, hydration packs and more. Sign up to the email newsletter to get the latest updates, so you don't miss out on any special offers.

10: Sweaty Betty

Website: www.sweatybetty.com

Sweaty Betty is a women-only fitness clothing brand, and it fuses style with technical materials. Most of the products are its own brand, but they have been specially developed with women in mind and are tailored for each sport that it focuses on. Pick your sport from the top and browse through the gorgeous creations. You have to be prepared to part with your money, as it's not the cheapest, but you are paying for well-engineered fabrics and designs that you won't see anywhere else.



Inspiration

Be motivated by our pick of some of the most inspiring running locations from real runners



146 Lose weight and run a marathon!



160 *Get up early to enjoy a morning run*

146 **Coastal paths**
Marvel at coastal paths on a run

148 **Off-road trails**
Abandon the tarmac for a great run

150 **Muddy forests**
Get ready for your first OCR!

152 **Steep inclines**
A perfect stamina exercise

154 **On the beach**
Challenge the calves with soft sand

156 **Country scenes**
Enjoy rural England on a run

158 **Setting a challenge**
Find a location that pushes you

160 **Early risers**
Get your miles at the crack of dawn

Coastal paths



The runner: Chris Dixon

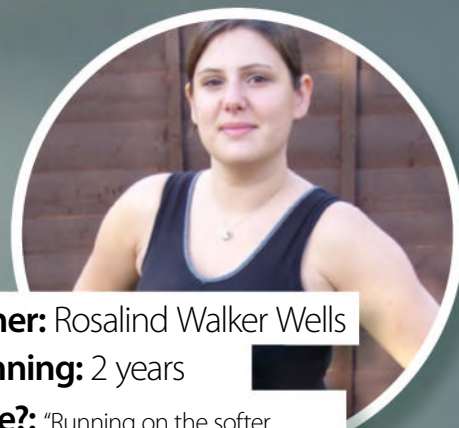
Time running: 7 years

Why here?: "Come rain or shine, the view is still encouragement enough to get up those hills, plus the mix of different terrains helps with my training, sand makes it harder work and tougher on the legs."

How often?: "I try to run four or five times a week and this route is my longest run of the week. The full length stretches out for 24 miles, so I just run until I'm tired."

Seasonal route?: "This route isn't that well-lit in the darker evenings so I do tend to stick to early mornings, unless I can get a running buddy to join me, plus watching the sunrise makes my day!"

Off-road trails



The runner: Rosalind Walker Wells

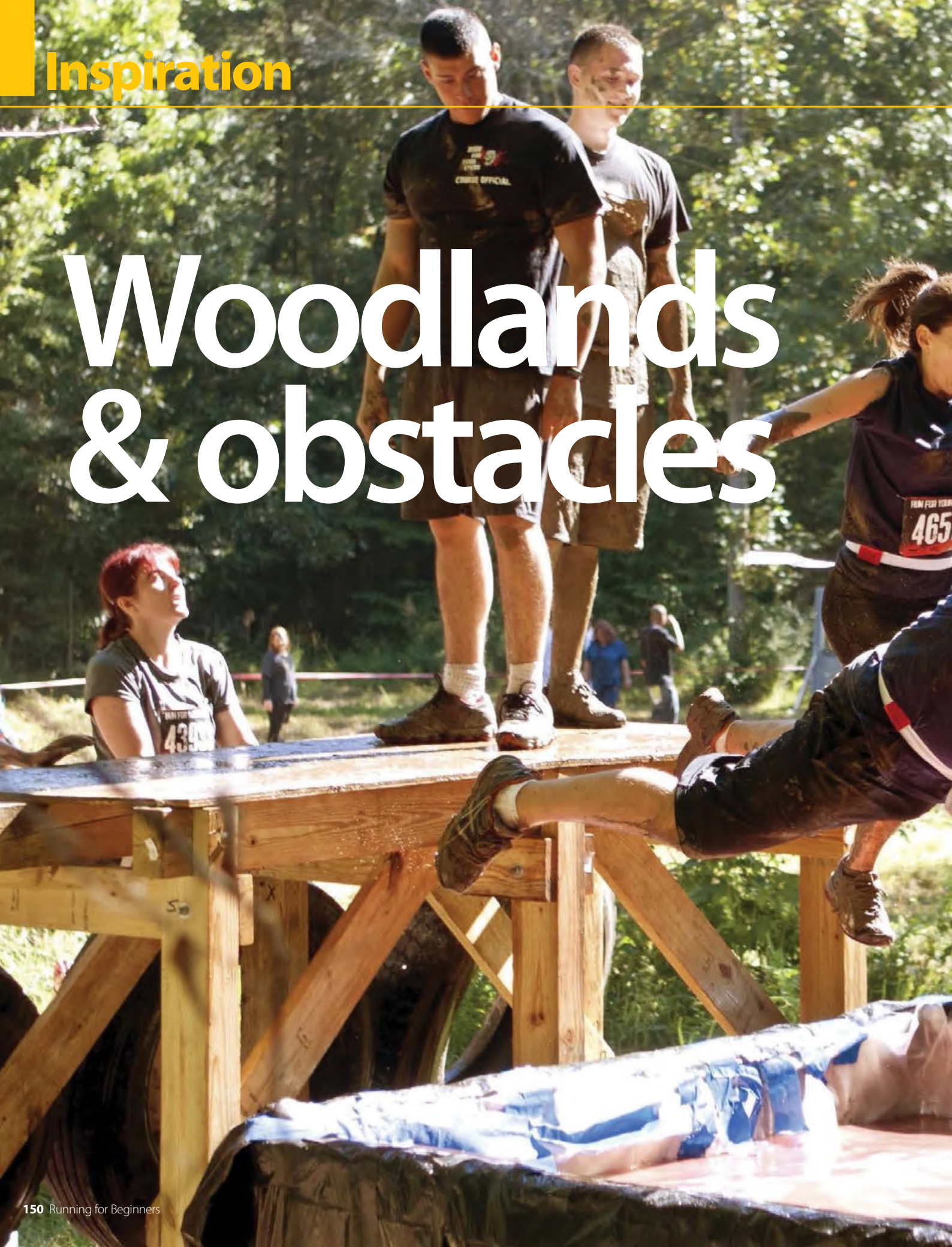
Time running: 2 years

Why here?: "Running on the softer ground is far better for my joints and it is a complete overall workout. It's also the perfect run to take my dog on. The time flies by when I'm not seeing where I am heading, so I usually manage to run further than I originally thought I could."

How often?: "Three times a week for about 30-40 minutes."

Seasonal route?: "The local off-road areas are only for lighter evenings in the summer, as the ground can become very hard and icy and it is easy to fall. Phone signal can also be a little poor too."

Woodlands & obstacles





The runner: James Sheppard

Time running: 2 years

Why here?: "The forest is my favourite terrain as it's varied and it never gets boring. In the summer, the ground dries for a springy step, and in the autumn it's the best mix of dry and boggy, so it's always a surprise, and in the winter it looks just beautiful. You may see a deer, you may see rabbit, but one thing is for certain, it's never boring."

How often?: "I aim to run in the forest every Sunday, and enjoy running there either on my own or in a group. I run on the street and along beach most days, but the forest is by far my favourite."

Seasonal route?: "I run the fitness trail around our local forest which has the occasional workout station made of renewable wood, so it breaks things up. I will always do one straight lap, and then on the second lap alter the route and go "off road", so through the treeline, and find new places to run."

Steep inclines



The runner: Brad Thomas

Time running: 5 years

Why here?: "After completing a few training plans up to 10K, I found I really enjoyed hill running. Many of my weekends are spent driving to hilly locations and running for a few hours in different locations and altitudes. Hill running is hard on the hips and knees, but with the correct balance of weight and running training, I make it work slowly and steadily."

How often?: "I go out running two or three times a week, covering varying distances, then at the weekend I will do a longer run, featuring some inclines."

Seasonal route?: "Running in the daytime, as I usually do, means my routes are good all year round."



On the beach



The runner: Charlie Crooks

Time running: 2 years

Why here?: "Being new to the sport, I really feel the impact from running on the pavement in my knees, so the sand is a welcome relief. It's hard work and I can't run for as long as I want to, but I feel stronger and fitter from doing it. I try to run for five minutes on the deep soft sand, then finish my run off on the wetter solid sand by the sea's edge. Timing it right to avoid the crowds means I must run early or late in the day, but this suits me fine with work."

How often?: "I run twice a week, but I make sure I keep cycling to work and go swimming regularly to stay fit."

Seasonal route?: "The sand gets hard in the winter, so I just move to the water's edge or promenade."



Country scenes



The runner: Paul Maidment

Time running: 7 years

Why here?: "Due to work I travel a lot, so I have to fit my runs in when and where I can. The best advantage to this is the ever-changing scenery and getting to see things I wouldn't usually notice from the drivers seat."

How often?: "It depends on where I am working, but usually four times a week. My kit is always in the van ready to go."

Seasonal route?: "In the winter I tend to stick to city streets but in the summer I stray as far out of the towns as I can."

Setting a challenge



The runner: Andy Easton

Time running: 23 years

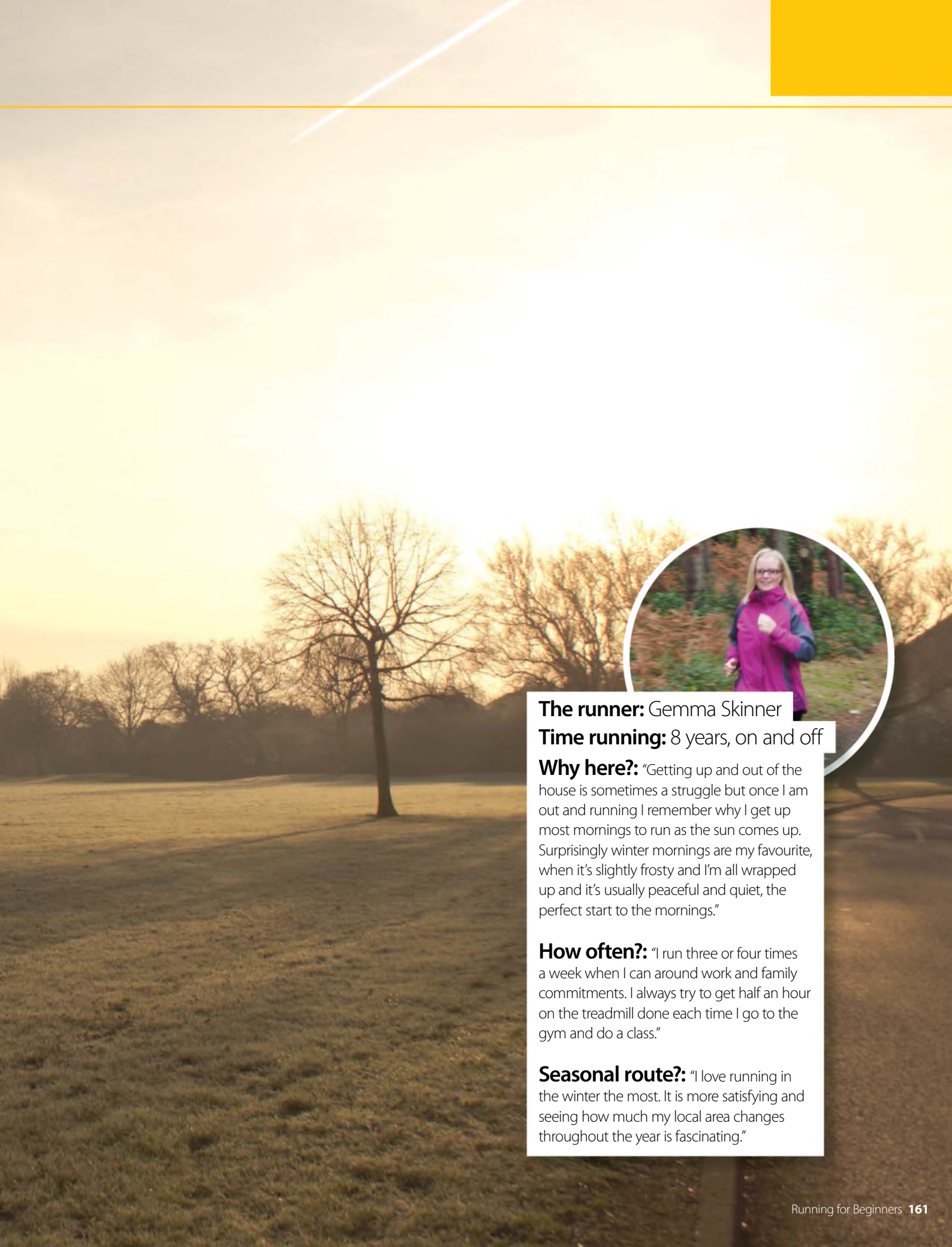
Why here?: "Running is well and truly part of my life and I now pick my holiday destinations on where my family and I would like to run and experience. We have run in some magnificent places and seeing it on foot allows us to explore and see so much more than if we were stuck in a car. Some routes we have driven I have put on my wish list, one day I will conquer the whole list, ticking off the runs I want to do in turn, it's good to set yourself challenges, it keeps you motivated and keen to achieve."

How often?: "I run every other day with my two dogs. When on holiday I take it a little easier and at a slower pace if in the heat!"

Seasonal route?: "I have run in many different places and temperatures. It's good to experience as much as you can when out running regardless of time of year."

A large, leafless tree stands in a grassy field at dawn or dusk, with a goalpost visible in the background.

Early riser



The runner: Gemma Skinner

Time running: 8 years, on and off

Why here?: "Getting up and out of the house is sometimes a struggle but once I am out and running I remember why I get up most mornings to run as the sun comes up. Surprisingly winter mornings are my favourite, when it's slightly frosty and I'm all wrapped up and it's usually peaceful and quiet, the perfect start to the mornings."

How often?: "I run three or four times a week when I can around work and family commitments. I always try to get half an hour on the treadmill done each time I go to the gym and do a class."

Seasonal route?: "I love running in the winter the most. It is more satisfying and seeing how much my local area changes throughout the year is fascinating."

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